IS CURLY JEWISH?

A POLITICAL SELF-PORTRAIT
ILLUMINATING THREE TURBULENT DECADES
OF SOCIAL REVOLT 1935–1965

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CHAPTER THREE

MINNEAPOLIS was a strange place in those first days—almost like a foreign country. For although I had traveled before, it was always to places where the atmosphere of home and New York had still been very strong. But I walked out of the railroad station in Minneapolis as a stranger, gaping at the low buildings, the big red trolleys that ran across the Mississippi River to St. Paul, and the traffic signals that clanged loudly every time the colors changed.

I hurried directly to the Trotskyist headquarters, where I had arranged to meet Bob and Jerry. The party office was in a converted store located on the shabby periphery of the downtown section; its window displayed Trotskyist and Socialist party literature, Spanish Civil War posters, and copies of the teamsters' newspaper. Hesitating before going in, I peered through a window. Toward the back of the room I could see a man sitting at a desk and a few other people grouped around a table. Finally I went into the store. The room was much cleaner and tidier than any of the headquarters in New York—no crumpled-up newspapers littered the corners, no opened cans of mimeograph ink dripped their black sticky contents onto the tables, and no discarded cigarette butts pebbled the floor.

"I'm a comrade from New York," I said to the man at the desk who had been eyeing me a little suspiciously. "My name is Paul Jacobs and I'm looking for two other comrades from New York who should have gotten here a few days ago. Did they leave a message for me?"

The comrade, who turned out to be the secretary of the branch, relaxed a little, but not much. "Yes," he answered, "your friends are here. They're down the street eating in the restaurant on the corner."

I left, disappointed at the cool greeting (after all, didn't he know who I was?) and went looking for Bob and Jerry in the restaurant. They were eating at a table, and they at least were glad to see me. Excitedly the three of us began talking about how to begin our new lives as professional revolutionists. As a first step we decided to find a place to live near the university campus, for all of us were really going to be students while we learned about being revolutionists.

We took a bus over to the university and walked around the grassy campus, which seemed huge to me compared to City College's tiny quadrangle. Then we meandered on the quiet, tree-lined streets that surrounded the campus, looking for signs advertising apartments for rent. We knew that if we wanted to avoid the dormitories we had to live in a house that had been approved by the university. At last we found a small furnished apartment in a house owned by an old lady who spoke with a thick Swedish accent. I went back to the station and got my bags while Jerry and Bob returned to headquarters to pick up their belongings.

As soon as we settled into our apartment, we decorated the walls with the pictures of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky that we had brought with us, and we placed a photo of Trotsky standing with a German shepherd dog in the place of honor on the bookcase we had filled with revolutionary literature.

The apartment had a kitchen and a bathroom as well as a bedroom and living room, but neither its furnishings nor its physical appearance was of any real significance to us; the place was only for sleeping, eating, and arguing about the movement. The party headquarters, not the apartment, was the center of our lives. The day after we moved in, it was to party headquarters we reported for duty.

We must have been quite a headache to the Trotskyist leaders in Minneapolis: suddenly they were confronted with three young Easterners who had presented themselves for revolutionary work without either experience or qualifications. In our minds we were putting ourselves at the disposal of the revolution, to be used as the leadership decided. But obviously their perception of us had far less significance attached to it.

Exulting in our freedom from the restraints of home and office, we sat around for a few days in the headquarters or in nearby restaurants, introducing ourselves to the comrades who came in, discussing with them the growth of fascism in Europe, the continuing depression in the United States, and the success of the "People's Front" position taken by the Communist International which had reversed the superrevolutionary "social-fascist" line that had caused my expulsion from the YCL. Now, with the slogan "Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism!" the Communists were busily wooing the religious organizations, trade unions, and liberal groups they had so vigorously denounced the year before. And as if all this were not enough to engross our full political attention, fierce fighting was going on in Spain and bitter internal conflicts were already dividing the Loyalist forces.

Few periods in politics have ever brought forth such emotionally intense responses from Americans as did the three politically jammed years between 1936 and 1939. The only event in America which comes close to it is the civil rights movement of the 1960s. When Negro and white youths go to jail singing "We Shall Overcome," they are having the same kind of highly intense experience we had in the thirties, although, in most cases, theirs is physically much worse than what we went through. But in one important respect they are more fortunate than we, for all their social energy is focused on one question, while we were plunged into despair or raised with hope by so many events that we felt as if we were under a massive barrage, as if history were attacking us.

And for me politics had another confusing dimension, for the fear of rejection, the misery of discarding an identity and searching for the new one, had to be expressed in the language of politics and to be painfully lived out inside the world of political events. I wanted to go to Spain, not just because I was involved politically in the daily anguish of the civil war but also because I saw myself as a hero. When I was younger and devouring the ten-cent pulp magazines, I was always a flier, shooting down the brave German ace who saluted me as he went down in flames, his white scarf whipping in the wind as I dipped my wings to honor a gallant foe. In the summer of 1936, in the midst of the heated political discussions about the Spanish Civil War, I could see myself at the front, a rifle slung over my shoulder, heroically

shouting "No Paseran! No Paseran!" while fighting so bravely against the fascists that my fame spread all over the socialist world.

Unfortunately, my potential as a military hero went unrecognized in Minneapolis. A week or two after our arrival, we were called to a meeting by the party leadership and informed that not only were we not going to Spain, but we weren't even going to be sent into trade-union work, which at that time held the next-highest prestige inside the organization. Instead Ray Dunne told the three of us that we had been assigned to help build up a Trotskyist youth group at the University of Minnesota campus.

Nothing I had learned at City College prepared me for the University of Minnesota. In the alcoves where I had sat at CCNY, everyone I knew talked about the boys who had jumped up on the platform of the chapel when the Italian Fascist students were speaking and had knocked them into the seats. But at Minnesota the big men on campus were the football players, and all students were expected to attend the games and to root for the team as well, to chant slogans and to sing the university song between halves. At CCNY politics was a common interest for a great number of students, including many who were majoring in physics or literature; at Minnesota politics didn't seem to be the concern even of those who were studying political science.

Soon, though, we discovered that we weren't alone on campus —there were at least a few other students who were politically identifiable as Communists, Socialists, or Trotskyists. As soon as the semester began, the comrades of the Minneapolis branch called a meeting of ten or twelve students who either were members of the Trotskyist youth group or were sympathetic to it. After organizing a branch at the university, we applied to the dean's office for permission to establish a Marxist club, to be used for recruiting new members and sympathizers. The club began holding weekly discussion meetings at which older comrades from the branch in Minneapolis lectured and at which we watched carefully for any signs of possible interest in the sparse audience.

The student group carried on other activities as well. We joined all the student organizations that we thought might provide either potential members or possible fields for militant action. Sometimes we even formed new groups, as for example when we organized a union of students working on National

Youth Administration jobs. The NYA, the youth version of the WPA, provided employment to students who needed part-time work. Drawing on what Mr. Lowenthal had taught me at the hospital, I had applied for and gotten a job as a lab assistant at the university photo lab on the agricultural campus, which was reached by a funny little trolley that ran between the two schools, some miles apart.

I was paid twenty-five cents an hour for such simple lab work as running a print-drying machine, putting rolls of film into developer tanks, mixing fixing solutions, and generally making myself useful. But then I discovered that I was replacing a regular lab assistant whose rate was about forty cents an hour. With the fact that students were being used as cheap labor for a springboard, and with the help of the other comrades, I began organizing a union of NYA students.

At an afternoon meeting with the dean held at our request, six or seven of us piled into his office, behaving as if he were the class enemy and we were the vanguard of the revolution, getting ready to take power. When he asked us what we wanted, I spoke for the group and presented him with our demands in what I thought was Ray Dunne's most Bolshevik style. The dean answered that neither he nor the university administration had any power to increase our monthly pay, since that was set by the government, and that the hourly rates seemed fair to him.

"If we don't get the increases, we'll strike!" I said.

He looked a little puzzled. "You're just students," he answered. "How can you strike? Who will you be striking against? The university? The NYA? The only thing that will happen if you go on strike is that you will lose your jobs."

Disconcerted but still mumbling threats, we filed out of the office and sat in a restaurant to decide on our next step. We had to admit that the dean was right—as students we had very little power to force the university to meet our demands. Then someone had a great idea: why didn't we affiliate our weak union of NYA students to the powerful teamsters' local and go back to the dean with that weight behind us? A couple of us went into Minneapolis, met with Ray Dunne and the party executive committee, and got a somewhat grudging approval of our scheme. A few days later the executive board of the teamsters' local approved our application and we were affiliated to it, although the relationship was a very informal one.

Back we went to the dean for a really nasty meeting, in which he threatened us and we threatened him. Once again he refused to meet any of our demands, and we stormed out of his office. But in a few days we won at least a partial victory, for our hourly rates were increased by the administration.

But I paid a heavy price for the success of this action, which attracted some notoriety at the university. A jealous boy friend of my old girl friend the dancer was attending the university, too. He lived in a dormitory and was a very proper, rich, stuffy young man whom I had always considered a pain in the ass. He had always thought of me as a rival, even long after I had lost interest in her, and he made a point of writing her parents about my activities, telling them to be sure to listen to a March of Time radio program dramatizing a campus meeting at which I had denounced the university administration for some action it had taken.

"Academic freedom is dead in America and its corpse is stinking!" I had shouted to the student crowd from the back end of a truck parked on the campus while reporters took down my words. A week later I proudly listened to a dramatization of my speech, not knowing my father was also listening in New York.

That speech ended the little financial help I had been getting from home. A few days later I received an angry letter from my father denouncing me for having lied to him about what I was going to do at the university. I answered just as angrily, and my relations with my parents became even more painful.

But I kept my misery about my family secret, for it seemed unworthy of a revolutionary. By then the Trotskyists had dissolved into the Socialist party and the Spartacus Youth League members were now members of the Young People's Socialist League. But even though nominally we were in the Socialist party, we still functioned as a Trotskyist caucus. For Bob, Jerry, and myself, the central focus of our lives was on our activities in the Young People's Socialist League branch at the university and in the Trotskyist group in Minneapolis. It was as if every cell in our bodies were infused with a political plasma. When we got up in the morning, we started talking politics, and we didn't stop until we went to sleep. And one night when the three of us got so terribly drunk on gin that we discussed each other's faults, even our aggressions and jealousies came tumbling out disguised as criticisms of each other's failures to meet the political and per-

sonal standards of good Bolsheviks.

The following morning we could hardly stand to look at each other, for despite the competition among us, and despite our secret vying for Ray Dunne's approval, the three of us were bound together both by the experiences we were sharing and the long relationship that had existed between Bob and me. We never went through a session like that again, and I think each of us tried hard to forget the cruel things we had said to and about each other. But my own desire for recognition never left me, and I sat through interminable meetings guiltily hoping that when the reports of activities were made, my accomplishments would be mentioned.

I felt I was a political ugly duckling among most of the comrades in Minneapolis, and especially in comparison with Bob and Jerry. They seemed better able to cope with the heavy prose of Marx and Lenin, they seemed more knowledgeable, and their arguments always seemed stronger than mine. The only part of our lives in which I felt more at ease and more competent than Jerry and Bob was outside the movement. I was more sophisticated than they were about food and liquor, I was the best cook among us, and at parties I could always make myself the center of attraction by telling jokes in all kinds of accents.

Most of our social life revolved around the movement. On week ends we went to parties given by couples who were married or living together, and sometimes we threw a party ourselves. Shortly after we arrived, Bob found a steady girl friend, his first real romance with a comrade. Jerry took out a whole series of revolutionary girls while I sneaked off by myself fairly often for dates with a rich girl who lived alone in an apartment in Minneapolis. I don't know how I met her, but I remember that the house had an indoor swimming pool and that after swimming we would lie on the floor of her apartment and make love. But I kept my dates with her secret and would lie to Bob and Jerry about where I'd been, probably because I was ashamed of the attachment I still had to the life I'd touched, enviously, while in the diamond business. Once or twice I did go out with the girl members of the branch, but I found the experience not quite to my taste, for in this area my standards were still of the bourgeoisie. One girl wore men's underwear, and another was wild to have me take away her virginity—a prospect which frightened the hell out of me, since I was still pretty inexperienced.

Life in Minneapolis always remained unreal, never really part of my identity, always something happening outside of me. This was so partly because it was my first sustained period away from home, partly because the physical characteristics of life were so different, and partly because of the tremendous psychological pressure exerted on us by the Minneapolis Trotskyists, who took their radicalism very, very seriously—all of which kept me in a continual state of guilt.

The very texture of life—its sights, sounds, smells, and especially its temperatures—made and kept Minneapolis very different from New York. The winter started earlier than in the East, lasted longer, and seemed fantastically cold. "You won't mind the cold," the local comrades were always telling us, "because it's a dry cold." But by the time the temperature had dropped to twenty below zero, I couldn't make any distinction between dry and wet cold. I just hated the whole goddamned thing, hated being continually bundled up, hated the snow and the ice that stayed on the ground for months instead of turning into slush in a matter of days. Driving a car was almost impossible because it was so difficult to get started, and sliding over the ice always scared me. In the winter the air was so frozen that the insides of my nostrils burned every time I ventured outside, and standing to wait for a bus or a trolley was agony. And once I couldn't help feeling a little spiteful glee when one of the local comrades who was always talking about the "nice, dry cold" got his penis painfully frostbitten because he had been nuts enough to try to pee while waiting for a trolley late one night.

We also ate differently in Minnesota, and it wasn't only because I had less money than when I'd been working at Kahn's. The delicatessens didn't sell spicy hot dogs or pastrami sandwiches. Danish pastries were called "snails," while the malted milks were so thick they had to be eaten with a spoon instead of sipped through a straw. We discovered cheap Swedish restaurants that served lingonberries with everything, and ate Swedish pancakes for dessert. Apartments had no dumbwaiters to carry the garbage down into the cellar or incinerator openings in the hallways into which we could throw papers. The house in which we lived was near the Mississippi River, and the river, lined with trees and grassy banks, seemed much more appropriate to the country than to a big city. The huge lakes, right inside of Minneapolis, were also strange to us, for we knew that cities didn't

have lakes—lakes were where you went for summer vacations.

But, more than anything else, it was the Minneapolis Trotskyists who made me feel somewhat uncomfortable. They really were Bolsheviks, not dilettantes, and we learned very quickly that they were harsh disciplinarians as well. And, like most Midwesterners, radicals or not, they were simultaneously suspicious and contemptuous of New Yorkers. The Minneapolis Trotskyists eyed all New York comrades in the same way as had the fraternity boys who had come to our apartment a few times to look us over as possible prospects. For a little while we had a continuous stream of them, but once they saw the pictures of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky on the walls and spotted the books and pamphlets, they ducked out hurriedly.

In Minneapolis we learned quickly that it was not easy to prove ourselves good Bolsheviks. The discipline was far stricter than it had been in the more easygoing radical atmosphere of New York, with its nice parties in the Village and the hours spent schmoozing over coffee in the cafeterias. In Minneapolis, if you were assigned to distribute leaflets at a union meeting, you went—for if you failed to show up without a very good excuse, like maybe dying, you had the prospect of facing Ray Dunne's cold eyes and implacable questions. For me, that was like being bawled out by my father all over again. And party meetings in Minneapolis didn't usually end with singing revolutionary songs —that was kid stuff, not for real Bolsheviks.

The signs of this toughness were everywhere. When armed guards were needed to protect Trotsky from the expected (and finally successful) attempts of the Communists to assassinate him, the Minneapolis branch supplied the toughest of the volunteers. When Chicago gangsters had attempted to move in on the Minneapolis local of the teamsters, they had literally been thrown down the steps of the union office and told that they would be killed if they returned. An unsolved murder of a teamster official added credence to the stories that circulated inside the branch about how the leadership in Minneapolis was faced continually with the threat of violent death and beatings.

The toughness of the leaders was combined with a hard, spare, ascetic quality that became a model for all of us. No one drank excessively at the social affairs held in the headquarters, and during the small fraction meetings that were always taking place in the headquarters there was very little kibitzing. The

comrades sat around a table taking turns rolling their cigarettes with a little machine, seriously discussing what the fraction should do to build the party's influence in the group to which it was assigned.

The very intensity and grimness of the radical movement in Minneapolis left little room for errors or weakness. After only a few weeks in Minneapolis, I understood very well how it was possible for this group of men to successfully run the teamsters' union and why the Minneapolis general strike had been run like a military operation: Ray Dunne and the people around him were very serious revolutionists.

And one sign of that seriousness was their intense hatred of the Stalinists, an attitude I absorbed very quickly. All of us knew without any doubts that the Communists under Stalin had betrayed the cause of world revolution and therefore had to be "exposed" to the working class for their counterrevolutionary role. But during the thirties exposing the Communists wasn't easy, for not only were they better organized, with better resources and many more members, but even more important, their new, all-inclusive, barbless "Peoples' Front" program made the Communist party out to be a kind of pleasant, bland, "progressive" organization that damn near anyone could join. The "Peoples' Front" line of the Communists gave them the easy access to the community that we openly revolutionary Trotskyists could never achieve. And, even worse, because the Communists controlled or had great influence in a very wide variety of groups, they were able to infect the entire liberal and union movement with their equally bitter anti-Trotskyist propaganda.

In New York City I had seen the Stalinists and the Trotskyists fight it out at street-corner meetings, with shouts and imprecations as their weapons; in Minneapolis we fought physically as well. One day a comrade came limping into the headquarters, beaten by a group of YCLers who had run into him on a trolley car. A week later we caught up with a few of them on a side street and left them bruised and battered in the gutter. During late 1936 and all of 1937 and 1938 the Spanish Civil War and the Moscow purge trials gave us daily doses of Stalinist poison and terror—doses which built up in us such a hatred for the Stalinists that even today at times I am overwhelmed by it.

For American liberals, especially those influenced by the

Communists, the Spanish Civil War was a clear and simple case of the loyalist good guys fighting the fascist bad guys. These people made no attempt to analyze the differences among the political parties that were fighting under the over-all rubric of loyalism, and the bitter internecine political warfare among the Spanish anarchists, Socialists, Trotskyists, and Stalinists was completely unknown to them. For Communist party members the Spanish Civil War was not much more complicated; they were completely convinced that whatever the Soviet Union did was correct, that the Trotskyists and anarchists were allies of the fascists, and that the loyalists could only win through Soviet aid and Communist leadership.

But for us Trotskyists the issues and political alignments in the war were far more complicated. We were convinced that Franco could only be defeated if the war against fascism were turned into a war for socialism, and we also believed—correctly, as it turned out—that the Soviet Union would sacrifice the Spanish loyalists, if necessary, to its own self-interest. Bitterly we knew from reports already beginning to filter back into the United States that the GPU, the Russian secret police, had taken over in Spain and that socialists, anarchists, and Trotskyists were being imprisoned or even shot by the Communists, sometimes right at the front where they were fighting the fascists. And as we devoured the reports coming in from Spain, we read in the anarchist, socialist, and Trotskyist press of how the Russians were using the aid they were sending the loyalists to blackmail the republican government into giving Spanish Communists positions of authority inside the government.

The Moscow trials and the ghastly purges which followed them, wiping out a whole generation of men who had created the Russian Revolution, were an even more traumatic experience for us, for here we Trotskyists were under direct attack. We were forced to defend ourselves against the charges that we were wreckers, saboteurs, and fascists; these charges were echoed by hundreds and thousands of liberals, who swallowed whole this huge monstrous lie of Stalin's and accepted it as the gospel until Khrushchev finally admitted that most of the executed had been innocent of the crimes to which they had even confessed. But that admission didn't happen until 1956, and in 1936 and 1937, at meetings of the National Student League in the Student Union building at the University of Minnesota, we young Trotskyists

sat writhing, as one Communist or Communist-influenced speaker after another got up to denounce us as fascists, kin to Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini.

(The vicious atmosphere developed from the slanders spread by the Communists about their political opponents accounts partially, I think, for the shabby role played by some intellectuals in abetting the violent and vulgar anti-Communism of the fifties. It was not until then that these intellectuals for the first time had an opportunity to respond to all the garbage that had been thrown at them for so long. Thus, they joined with the far right, forgetting that their own grievances against the Communists had not been because the Stalinists were radicals, but because they weren't radical enough.)

But despite the fact that we three Easterners shared with our local comrades a common cause against the Stalinists, we were outsiders in Minneapolis; and somewhere below the surface, in some unspoken way, I thought, probably incorrectly, that we were viewed differently because we were all Jews. Some Jewish Trotskyists lived in the Minneapolis area, but in great contrast to New York, they made up a small minority in the organization.

Anti-Semitism became an issue once in Minneapolis, when our campus group arranged a public meeting for a speaker from the Farm Holiday organization in North Dakota, a group which was forcibly preventing farm foreclosures. We were vociferous supporters of the Farm Holiday organization, especially after we discovered that some of its leaders were either members of the Socialist party or sympathetic to it. One of them was in Minnesota on a speaking tour, and we arranged a public meeting on campus for him. The hall was jammed when the lanky, weatherbeaten farmer was introduced, and he held everybody's attention as he described in a flat Great Plains accent how the members of the Farm Holiday group attended foreclosure sales carrying shotguns and pitchforks. When the foreclosure auction began under the watchful eyes of the group, no more than one bid was ever made for the farm and equipment, and that bid was always for one dollar. The sale would then be over and the farm returned to its owner. All of the comrades in the audience were excited and thrilled with this militant speech until we heard the Farm Holiday leader wind up his speech with a denunciation of "those Jew bankers who are trying to steal all the farms in the Dakotas." He went on in some detail about the "Jew" bankers despite our fran-

tic signals to him, which he obviously didn't understand. At the end of the meeting, fortunately only a few minutes later, we rushed up to the platform to berate him for his nonsocialist anti-Semitism, only to be met with his genuine bewilderment. To that farmer, all Jews were bankers out to screw farmers, and he could not understand our horror at what he had said. And despite his identification of all Jews as bankers, he insisted that he was a radical socialist.

Still, the incident had no great significance for me or anyone else with whom I talked about it at the next meeting of the unit. We all decided that the socialist farmer's anti-Semitism was his own aberration, resulting from a rural isolation, in which he had never had any contact with Jewish workers or radicals. And except for that one instance, the "Jewish question" was rarely a matter for discussion, either in our apartment or at the meetings. When we did discuss Zionism, it was as simply another form of bourgeois nationalism, and the events occurring in Palestine were lost to our sight in the bitter news that kept coming from Spain and Germany. On the rare occasions when we did discuss Palestine, we always ended up with a perfunctory call to the Arab and Jewish workers to unite for the overthrow of both Arab and Jewish capitalists.

Early in 1937 our household began breaking up. Jerry, who was pretty skinny, had developed a racking cough and was talking about moving to a warmer climate, while Bob spent all his free time with Hilda, his first and only love. We were terribly broke, too. For a while we had managed to pay the rent on the apartment by dropping classes at the university and getting a refund on our tuition, but soon we exhausted that resource. Finally, when Jerry left for Arizona, Bob and I decided to break up our housekeeping arrangements. Neither of us was going to classes any longer, and, even more pressing, we had taken opposing positions in a new factional fight inside the organization which found me, once again, on the side of the minority.

With the split-up of the apartment, a year began which was so painful and lonely that even now, more than twenty-five years later, I can hardly bear to think about it. I felt completely alone, betrayed by Jerry's defection and Bob's deep amatory involvement. I was homeless, too, drifting around to the apartments of comrades for a few days or a week at a time and sleeping sometimes on chairs at the back of the headquarters. I was

so broke and so hungry that I stole empty milk bottles from doorsteps for the deposits, and finally I got so desperate I even rifled the can in the headquarters into which people dropped money to pay for the literature they bought. I was dirty, too, and furtively had to use the public baths in Minneapolis where for a penny or two you were given a small worn bath towel and a thin wafer of gritty soap to take with you into a cold little room that enclosed a gray bathtub. Worst of all, after I took a bath I had to get back into the dirty clothes I had been wearing, for I had no others.

Finally the party leadership assigned me to be the youth organizer in St. Paul, across the river. In a way this was the local equivalent of Siberia, for the adult branch there had only a few members, and the headquarters was a miserable, tiny, and very dark store in the skid-row section. When I first went to St. Paul, I lived in a succession of dreary furnished rooms, from which I was always being locked out for not paying the rent. Then for a month or two I lived with a married couple who were members of the branch and their stone-deaf father, who had been a boilermaker in the railroad shops. So deafened by his work that he could hear absolutely nothing, he sat all day long in an armchair, glowering at me, his suspenders looped over his long-sleeved, highnecked, and very dirty underwear.

The old man, a devout Catholic, never spoke to me except to shout some order about cleaning the house, and I suppose he must have despised me, for I symbolized the corruption of his daughters, both of whom had married Trotskyists and left the Church. Finally the tension between us became so unbearable that I left to move in with another comrade, a Latvian who lived alone in a tiny badly heated two-room house on the outskirts of St. Paul. I had seen this comrade at meetings but had never talked much with him and had no notion of how he lived or what he was like. Although he was working, he was very stingy and didn't share what he had with me. In his mind the bargain he'd made with the organization consisted of supplying me only with a narrow bed in the combination living room and kitchen. An old kitchen range and a small wood-burning stove in his tiny bedroom kept the house slightly warm. Out in back was a filthy privy which, because it was cold, didn't stink, as it certainly would have in the warm weather.

I had bed without board from this comrade all through the

fall and early winter of 1937, and life became more and more of a nightmare as the days went by. My overcoat and a dirty quilt were my blankets, and I slept in my long underwear. In the morning I would struggle out of bed after my landlord had left for work, piss in the sink, and throw a spoonful of coffee into some boiling water. Sometimes, too, I had scrounged enough money the day before to buy a loaf of day-old raisin bread, and I would shovel great chunks of it into my mouth as I gulped the scalded coffee. Sometimes I ate rhubarb, for it grew wild just outside the shack and I could pick it easily. Then, always still hungry, I would drag myself from the house and walk a couple of miles to the headquarters, head down, looking in the gutter in the vain hope that someone would have dropped some money there.

After I had opened the door of the headquarters, I would clean it out if there had been a meeting the night before, sweeping up the cigarette butts and rearranging the chairs. Then the endless days began. Once in a while someone would drop in to look at the literature, and in the late afternoons occasionally one of the members would drop in. But generally I spent my days alone in the headquarters except when I went out to look for jobs which I never found, or when I took the trolley over to the Minneapolis headquarters to report on the work I was supposed to be doing to build up the youth branch in St. Paul. There, in the warmth and bustle of the headquarters, I would lie about my activities, always sensing that no one believed my lies.

The nights were even worse, for then the hunger and the sense of isolation from the whole world was more acute. I always tried to get back to the house late, trying to arrive after my roommate was asleep, but sometimes, when I couldn't face being cooped up with him, I would sleep in the back of the headquarters on four or five wooden chairs pushed together. Only a few weeks after I'd moved in, Ivan had showed me a collection of dirty pictures which he had stacked up in three or four large bureau drawers. It was an incredible array, one that he had been saving for many years the way other misers save string, and many nights he went into his bedroom, carrying along handfuls of his pictures. Then I would hear him groaning as he masturbated, and I would burrow deep under my coat, trying to shut out the sounds that stimulated me, too, into fitful sexual fantasies.

I might not have survived those months in St. Paul without

the help of two sisters who were almost as poor as I and the family of a girl, Paula Meyers, whom I had known at the university. The two sisters, one of whom was crippled, were members of the organization. The healthier one was a waitress and had a miserable job in a St. Paul restaurant, while the crippled girl was unemployed like me, but unlike me was drawing some kind of relief from the city. As often as I could I visited them in their little basement furnished room where we would sit for hours, rolling cigarettes, drinking coffee, eating stale sweet rolls and talking. Both of them were exceedingly ugly, and both of them were exceedingly kind to me. But it was the Meyers family that really saved me from drifting off into some unknown nether world. Paula was a student whom I had gotten to know at the university while she lived with her parents in a solid brick house in St. Paul. Her father was a doctor and her mother was a kind warm woman who never questioned me nor argued with me about my way of life. Paula had a kid sister named Donna, and on nights when her parents went out and she was Donna's baby-sitter, I would go over to keep her company. The Meyers family came from the same tradition of Reform Judaism in which I had been brought up, and on the nights when they asked me to stay to dinner, the atmosphere was a very familiar one. Sometimes, too, when I was very hungry and it was too late at night to wake up the family, I would stand outside the house throwing pebbles at Paula's window until she heard me and opened it. Then she would go downstairs to the refrigerator, make up a few sandwiches, and pass them out to me. Even though I gulped them so quickly that I couldn't taste them, those sandwiches were the best I have ever eaten in my life.

As the days dragged on in gray cold and hunger, I went to the headquarters less and less, did fewer and fewer of the tasks assigned to me, and stayed in bed longer and longer. It was hardly worth the effort to drag myself from under my overcoat, and the hunger pains were less severe in bed. So I stayed in a constant drowsing daze somewhere between sleep and wakefulness but closer to sleep.

After I hadn't shown up at headquarters for some time, two of the comrades came to the house to find out what was wrong. I sent them away without even getting out of bed, and alarmed, they went to Minneapolis to report on my hazy and confused condition. Bob came and took me back to Minneapolis with him,

telling me that Ray Dunne wanted to talk to me. That afternoon in the headquarters Dunne informed me that I had to leave Minneapolis, that the party would not be responsible for me any longer.

And so one very cold day, a failure as a Bolshevik, I took the trolley to the outskirts of St. Paul and stood on the highway, stamping my high leather shoes to keep my feet from freezing and fingering the Teamsters Union button I had stuck on the side of my cap in the hope that a truck driver would see it and think I was a member of the union. Finally a car slowed down and stopped for me a few hundred yards away. I ran frantically toward it, my suitcase banging painfully against the side of my leg, afraid the driver might change his mind and drive away without me if I didn't show how eager I was to ride with him, how anxious I was not to keep him waiting an instant longer than necessary, and how grateful I was for his stopping to pick me up.

I got in the warm car and we drove east on the highway, back toward New York.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RETURN TRIP to New York turned out to be only a nightmarish extension of the physical squalor and psychological misery of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

It was bitterly cold on the highway and since I had no money, I ate very infrequently—only when the driver of the car or truck that picked me up bought me a meal. Getting a free meal required a careful approach. If the driver stopped at mealtime and said he wanted to eat, you had to say, "Well, I'll just stay in the car and wait." Then sometimes he would ask why, and you could tell him you were broke, which might bring an offer to feed you. But just as often he didn't ask, and so you waited for him, getting hungrier and hungrier, watching him eat inside the diner. And sometimes it was too risky to beg a meal, for the driver might get suspicious and tell you he had changed his mind and wasn't going any farther. When that happened, you would get out of the car and a few minutes later see it flash by, the driver looking intently ahead at the road, too embarrassed to turn his head toward where he had left you standing, cursing.

Many other niceties had to be learned about hitching rides. It was always better if you could get to an intersection where there was a traffic light, because some of the cars would have to stop and wouldn't be speeding down the road so fast their drivers couldn't easily slow down for you. Being at an intersection also meant that you could ask the drivers to give you a ride while they were waiting for the light to change, thus giving them a chance to look you over as a possible risk. When you did this, you had to be careful to speak in a nice voice, using words that

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Harrison E. Salisbury

A Journey for Our Times

A MEMOIR

A Cornelia & Michael Bessie Book

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1 | Child of War

To a workingman, head tucked into collar against the wind, hurrying home in the dark Minnesota November, the figure of a small boy slowly stomping across the snowy lawn beyond the yellow arc of gaslight was almost invisible, a blur against the crepuscular shadows of the gabled house. A flint-edged wind discouraged curiosity, but if, despite wind, and cold, and winter twilight, the man had taken note, he would perhaps have been puzzled at the boy's movements, trudging a dozen paces toward the naked thorn apple hedge, feet squeaking on the dry snow, abruptly reversing and repeating his maneuver again and again, almost as though he was standing guard.

The small boy was myself, and in fact I *was* standing guard. It was late November 1917. The Revolution had triumphed in Petrograd and that evening I was a member of the Children's Regiment. I wore my high-peaked Budenny helmet of gray felt with its red star, and a long-skirted uniform coat over Cossack boots. I thrust my hands deep into black gauntlets and on my shoulder I bore a Berdan rifle. Back and forth I paced before the Winter Palace; back and forth beside the parapet beyond which lay the expanse of Palace Square and the shaft of the monument to Alexander I. Occasionally, I glanced at the glowing windows of the palace and saw my silhouette on the crust of snow: the peak of my helmet, the long point of my bayonet, black against the white. The scene was more real than life. I was a boy soldier on sentry duty.

Then, as I knew it would, came the voice of my mother at the kitchen door. "Bunny! Bunny!" she called. "Time to come in. You'll catch your death of cold."

I hesitated a moment to show that I was not hungry, not cold, not beginning to get a bit frightened by my fantasy, then I turned, left the parapet of snow I had built, and with a last look to the dark curve of Royalston Avenue, where the enemy lay hidden off toward the coalyards, I hurried to the house which my grandfather had built and where I had lived since I was born, on November 14, 1908. Stacking beside the door the rifle I had fash-

ioned from a two-by-four, I brushed the snow from my feet and passed into the radiant sphere of the kitchen, with its coal range and the copper sink so veined with solder it looked like a relief map of Europe. The room was filled with smells: beans and molasses bubbling in an earthen crock, the scent of brown bread, coffee heating in a granite pot and the spice of fresh gingerbread pinching my nostrils.

I hung up my helmet, a white-and-red stocking cap, and my uniform greatcoat, a sheep-lined mackinaw, and put away my gauntlets of rabbit fur with the skin outside. I stood there a nine-year-old fourth grader, wearing itchy wool union suit, flannel shirt, dark brown corduroy britches, long black stockings, heavy wool socks neatly folded over the tops of my soft elkskin boots, suddenly hungry and cold, cheeks chapped, nose running, Petrograd, the Winter Palace, the Children's Regiment vanishing as I sat down at table with my father, my mother and my seven-year-old sister, Janet, to a steaming plate of pork and beans.

"What were you doing out in the yard?" my father asked.

"Just playing," I said, keeping my eyes down and reaching for the ruby red flask of ketchup.

I've looked back a hundred times at that nine-year-old youngster, particularly during my long years in Russia, wondering whether, in fact, I was "just playing."

I think I first heard the names of Lenin and Trotsky a month or two later, in early February 1918, about the time Trotsky submitted to the astonished German plenipotentiaries at Brest Litovsk his proposal of no war, no peace. I could not have guessed that they would run through my life like a red thread.

Afternoons now were growing longer in Minneapolis, and one day when I came home from school I saw a new boy outside a house across the street, a verandaed house of fading red which was being rented to rooms, the original owners, the Dericksons, who like my grandfather had bought a lot in the fashionable Oak Lake Addition in the 1880s, having, as had most of the others, sold their place and moved away.

On this afternoon I was busy behind my snow fort, laying by a supply of icy snowballs with which to repel attack by youngsters passing down Royalston Avenue or issuing from the alley which [illegible] occasionally at the boy across the

street, a slight youngster, dark, olive-skinned, a bit taller and older than myself, wearing tan muffler, black cap and a torn red sweater over a dark blue woolen work shirt. On his feet were rubber boots, the thin knee-high glossy kind that kids wore when the ice melted in spring. He was fashioning the snow figure of a slender young girl, and even to my rude eye it had a grace that set it apart from the slushy yard, the dingy house, the stains of yellow horse piss and brown droppings from the heavy teams of sledges that passed by.

A sense of envy seized me. I picked up a snowball and threw it across the street. It scudded into the snow and the boy went on working. I threw another. No response. I threw a third. It hit the slender figure, smashing away her shoulder. The boy turned and cried: "Why did you do that?" I saw tears in his brown eyes. Filled with shame, I stood a moment, then crossed the street. "Maybe we can fix it," I said. "No," the boy said. "No. It can't be fixed." He gave a kick and the snow maiden crumpled. "What's your name?" I asked. "Reuben," he said. "What's yours?" "My name is Bunny," I said. I hated that name. I hated it when my mother and sister called me Bunny. I fought any boy who called me Bunny, but now I gave it to the boy as a kind of penance. "Bunny," I said, "that's my name." The glance he gave me burned into my mind, and years later, describing him in a sketch which I called "Christ Was Born in Asia," I wrote that he looked like the figure of Jesus in a Pre-Raphaelite painting.

"Would you like a glass of tea?" he asked. "My father is upstairs."

I had never heard of drinking tea from a glass. "Yes," I said. "I'd like that a lot."

Reuben's father was Nathan Rosen. He told me about Lenin and Trotsky and Russia and the Revolution and the Czar and the Jews and the pogroms and so many things that my head almost burst. He had fled Russia to escape the pogroms and the Czar's twenty-five-year term of military duty and more importantly because he had become a revolutionary. He had been born in a village in Belorussia between the rivers Dnieper and Sozh, names that meant nothing to me until I went to Russia during World War II. Fierce battles were fought there in 1941 near Gomel, at the hinge of Belorussia, the Ukraine and Russia proper.

Nathan Rosen, slim, dark, lively, had a talent for painting. A

local aristocrat offered to send him to St. Petersburg to study, but his family could not spare him. It was the time of the pogroms. Young Nathan looked more Italian than Jewish. He hung about the teahouses where police agents and Black Hundred toughs gathered and he tipped off Jewish self-defense groups about their plans. When he was conscripted for the war against Japan, his regiment mutinied. He made his way to London, where his fiancée joined him. They were married at a registry office on Piccadilly Circus and came to Winnipeg. When war broke out in August 1914, they moved to Minneapolis, Nathan fearful that he might again be conscripted.

Now he was starting to work as a painter—houses, signs, decorations, paperhanging. They lived in three rooms on the second floor, Nathan and his wife, Edith, baby Harold, Reuben and his sister, Bessie, whose sculpture in snow Reuben had been making.

That afternoon we sat in a kitchen crowded with a tall armoire and a magnificent chair that had carved griffins, claw feet and a black leather seat. Reuben loved to run his hands over the silken sheen of the mahogany. I imagined it must have come from Russia. A kettle simmered on the stove, the air was filled with steam and the windows had glazed with frost. A huge brass engine hissed away, a samovar, the first I'd seen. Everything was mysterious and foreign and unknown. I felt very brave to be sitting in so strange a place. Mr. Rosen poured me a glass of black tea and gave me a lump of sugar. "Here," he said, "drink it the Russian way. Put the sugar in your mouth." He took a lump and sucked the tea through it. I had never tasted tea. Children weren't supposed to drink tea. It stunted their growth. So did coffee. Children drank milk and cocoa. Mr. Rosen didn't seem to know this. Nor did he care whether I drank my tea or not; he was too excited, talking about Russia in words and accent that I didn't always understand.

"Enormous things are happening," he said. "The world is changing. The Czar is finished. So is Kerensky. Trotsky and Lenin are changing the world. When the war ends, revolution will sweep Europe—Germany first, then France and England. Even here in America. You'll read about it in the newspapers." I could see that Reuben was a little embarrassed at the torrent of his father's words. "Maybe not here, Papa," he said quietly. "You read the papers. Even here.

The Revolution has started. Nothing will be the same again. Remember what Karl Marx said, and Engels too."

I wanted to tell Mr. Rosen how I had stood guard at the Winter Palace, but he was talking about the *real* Revolution. He came from the *real* Russia. He was a *real* revolutionary. I had just been playing, making up a story from the dispatches of Floyd Gibbons, the *Chicago Tribune* man who wore a black patch over one eye. Gibbons was my hero, along with General Blackjack Pershing, Lord Kitchener (my favorite—I could not believe he had been lost on the *Hampshire*), Edith Cavell, the King of Belgium and Colonel George E. Leach of Minnesota's own 151st Field Artillery, who had gone to Central High with my mother, very handsome but very dumb, she said. At exam time she had had to whisper the answers to him. Later George Leach would become mayor of Minneapolis, campaigning in his uniform, very handsome, but he still didn't know the answers.

World War I was my life. I learned to read sitting in Unk's lap, picking out headlines about the battle on the Marne in the *Minneapolis Journal.* Unk was James Pritchard, my father's uncle, and he had fought at Shiloh and endured the hell of Andersonville prison. It left him a little fuzzy and sometimes he put sugar in his soup, thinking it was oatmeal. He was a gentle-hearted man who lived with us and looked after the furnaces—two because the house was so big—until one day when he kept starting fires in the toilets, complaining that somehow they didn't draw very well. After that he went to live in a nursing home.

When I launched my literary career in 1918, my first work was a historical treatise called "The Great War." It filled seven pages (including penciled illustrations and maps) of my old green copybook. I began with these words: "1914—Germany declared war on France August 1, 1914. All France was astire."

I didn't stay long that day at the Rosen flat. I refused the garlic sausage, the spiced cakes, the dill pickles encrusted with salt, the black bread and herring. My mother had laid down a strict rule. I was never, never to visit a boy's house without first getting permission. Quickly I retreated outside, across the street past the lamp, its gas mantle glowing soft and yellow, and into my house. I had had my first experience of Russia. I guess I was a Bolshevik before I was ten, but by the time I was eleven I was wearing a Pershing for President button.

When I finally found myself in Russia in 1944 and began a long career as correspondent, a specialist in Soviet affairs and a historian, I came to realize that nowhere in that gray wasteland would I ever taste the wine of the Revolution as pungent and pure as that of my childhood in the Oak Lake Addition.

I was born a Victorian child. Edward had ascended the throne by the time of my birth, but Victoria still reigned at 107 Royalston Avenue. My grandmother, Mary Pritchard Salisbury, dressed my father in a black velvet suit with gold embroidery like Little Lord Fauntleroy's and had Mr. Schuesler, the photographer on Hudson Street in Mazomanie, Wisconsin, take his picture on a little rattan chair, looking woeful. My father dressed me in the same suit and took my picture. I hated that Fauntleroy outfit, but when the time came, I dressed my son Michael in it, posed him on the curlicued walnut sofa that had stood in the parlor at 107 and took his picture. Continuity.

In his heart, my father never left the house on Royalston Avenue. There are times when I wonder whether I have. Father sold the house just before I went to college and we moved to Kenwood Hill, but when Father walked home from the factory at night, his legs occasionally took him over the Seventh Street bridge, across the railroad tracks, past the coalyards and up to 107 before he realized that he didn't live there anymore. It was home for him and home for me and hardly a day of my life was to pass without my thinking about it. In strange cities I put myself to sleep walking through the rooms at 107, remembering the long yellow Dagestan runner on the hall floor, the red of the Khiva in the parlor, my mother's favorite picture, "The Age of Innocence," over the sofa, the seven-branched candelabra on the mahogany table that had belonged to my great-great-aunt in Cincinnati (or was it Philadelphia?), the gentle head of a deer (how could my father have shot it?) over the fireplace in the dining room; remembering my grandfather's cherrywood library, the folios of Shakespeare lying flat under Milton's *Paradise Lost* with the Doré engravings. Later I was to discover plain-brown-wrapper copies of *What Every Boy Should Know* and *What Every Girl Should Know* hidden back of Milton; the juxtaposition of Doré's naked men and women amid the flames, and the giddy perils of adolescence, convinced me, for a time, that hell was real. On the library shelves stood volumes of *Scribner's, Harper's*

and *Century* magazines, bound in black leather by my grandfather. He was a doctor and he read these volumes, sitting in the carved cherrywood rocking chair where he spent the last year of his life, knowing from his own diagnosis that his heart had worn out, reading and drowsing and waiting for it to stop beating, as soon it did. Here were Gibbon's Rome and Green's history of England, Grant's memoirs, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray, John Greenleaf Whittier and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Louisa May Alcott and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant, a nineteenth-century litany. I read them all, serially, in continuous wonder, shelf by shelf, between the ages of nine and thirteen. I grew up knowing what culture was—it was the books on the walls of my grandfather's study.

On New Year's Day in 1966, I found myself in the North Vietnam countryside, eighty-five miles south of Hanoi. It had been a long day, spent driving down narrow bomb-pitted roads, with the threat of more American bombers at any moment. Now I was spending the night on a slat-bottomed bed with a straw mattress in a barracks with open sides and clay floor. I was too tired to sleep. I thought I could hear the rustle of people moving past the compound and wondered what was happening. I was an enemy deep behind the lines. I did not even know the name of the place where I was staying. It was cold under the thin blanket and I lay half awake and a little frightened. Finally, I turned my mind away from Hanoi, away from the war and the bombs, and back to the security of Royalston Avenue. I sat again in our light carriage, the black-painted trap, my father driving Dolly, our old bay, I sitting beside him, my mother and Janet in the rear, clop-clop, neatly around the curve under the elms, Dolly's hooves falling rhythmically on the soft brown earth of the street freshly watered by a yellow sprinkling wagon. My father, dark and handsome, pulled up at 107, the reins taut in his hands, and my mother, broad-brimmed straw hat with mauve veil sheltering her blond hair and pale complexion from the sun, alighted to the granite stepping-stone, Janet and I following her, scrambling up the five wooden steps of the veranda, overhung with grapevines, bursting through the double oak doors with their brass fittings and into the entry, past the half-glass doors, etched with flowers, into the front hall with its elk's head, shot by my uncle Scott,

Evans on his way to the Klondike in 1900, grim, menacing and sprinkled so heavily with red pepper against moths that I could not come close without sneezing. A crystal-faceted chandelier sparkled over the oak staircase with its polished newel and banister, whose smooth surface first gave me a warm masturbatory pleasure and made me think of my girl cousin Eleanor Evans, who liked to slide down the rail, thin legs clenching its rotundity, short skirt pulled back and panties riding up narrow thighs.

That night in the Vietnam countryside, I walked through the house on Royalston Avenue as I had so often, and finally I sat on the floor beside the window box in my grandfather's library, pulling out of its depths the architectural journals my father kept there, looking at the plans for the house on the Mississippi riverbank which he dreamed of but never built, taking out the Frederic Remington engravings and the lithographs of the Philadelphia Exposition, and finally a worn purple-and-gold book, *Dick Whittington,* my father's childhood favorite. I listened again to the words: "turn, turn again, Dick Whittington, Lord Mayor of London Town," and at that moment the Bow Bells sounded as they had for Dick Whittington. I awoke. It was not yet dawn, but the iron bells in the shattered tower of the bombed-out Cathedral of St. François Xavier across the rice paddies were calling black-pajamaed peasants to mass before daylight, before the first flight of American bombers appeared in the sky. Pulling aside the mosquito net, shivering in the early coldness, I saw the peasants moving along the willow-lined roadway almost without sound on inner-tube sandals, shuffling past the barracks on their way to pray. In an instant I was transported from my Victorian dream to the reality of grass-cutter bombs, of napalm and Agent Orange, to the deadly imposition by my loved America of pain and horror on an ancient Asian people.

2 The Making of a Patriot

War was the glory of my childhood. I must confess there was not a hint of moral outrage in my being, nor have I ever been a pacifist. I could say with FDR: "I hate war"; I can say that I have feared war and have opposed war, notably the Vietnam war; but until nuclear war was born, I never believed in a world without war. Now no other kind of world is imaginable.

As a youngster I surrounded myself with lead soldiers, guns, toy cannon, cap pistols. I compelled my complaisant sister, Janet, to play war with me, once keeping her so long in the shallow trenches we had dug in the hot sun that she almost suffered sunstroke.

(I was amused later to learn that Vladimir Lenin and his brothers and sisters played war endlessly in the parlor of their house high on the Volga River bluff at Simbirsk.)

After supper each evening, our family gathered with my uncle Andrew and aunt Mary, who lived on the second floor of our house. We wound up the mahogany Victrola and played "Madelon," "Tipperary," "Over There" and the rest. My father and uncle gravely discussed military strategy.

A Red Cross unit headed by my mother and my aunt met at our house to roll bandages, the ladies in white uniforms and turbans. They rolled hundreds of muslin bandages, knitted 1,194 pairs of socks, 1,003 sweaters and twelve dozen face masks. We children learned to knit too. I shudder to think of the soldiers who had to wear our socks.

I dreamed of Allied victory. My aunt Sue Salisbury was in France with the YMCA. Letter after letter flowed back from Paris, full of the *Boche* and his bestiality. I began to feel ashamed that my father was not Over There; that he was in the Home Guard—in uniform, true, but no tin hat, drilling on Monday evenings and on Wednesdays serving ice cream cones and sodas to Our Boys at the Army and Navy Club. He would come home tired on Wednesday evenings but lugging a gallon of left-over ice cream, a consolation for not being at the Front.

I was totally chauvinistic. When I saw in the atlas the enor-

mous globs of British Empire red spread over the continents, it made me angry that the American green covered only Hawaii, the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, Alaska and the Philippines. I yearned for an American Empire on which the sun never set. My father was a Teddy Roosevelt Republican, a Bull Mooser, and so was I. In 1916, at the age of seven, I was against "Yellow Dog" Wilson, who was "too proud to fight." I agreed with my father and my uncle Andrew, who said that Wilson was *afraid* to fight.

I could not believe my ears when I heard my uncle John Dort, sitting on the porch of his house in St. Paul (living in St. Paul was bad enough in those days of Twin City rivalry), tell my father that he was voting for Woodrow Wilson. John Dort—a locomotive engineer, a hero—a Wilson Democrat? I was stunned. Only town drunks and Irishmen were Democrats.

When we entered the war, no one was more vigilant than I against the "pros," that is, the pro-Germans, secret enemies of Our Cause. Minnesota had a large population of Scandinavians, many Germans and a small Irish minority. The war was not a "Crusade for Democracy" to them. Many of the Germans and Scandinavians were socialists. They believed the war reflected the rivalry of capitalists eager to grab each other's wealth.

None of this was perceived by me. I listened with rabbit's ears to my elders talking about the "pros"; about old German friends who were suspect, especially a prosperous family that ran a big liquor store. The test was Liberty Bonds. If you didn't buy bonds, you were a "pro." Even if you did buy bonds, you might be trying to mask your secret sympathy for Kaiser Bill. I visioned the Kaiser as a death's head, bony fingers dripping blood, a necklace of skulls, wolf's teeth, spiky helmet, devil's tail. My image may have derived from one of John McCutcheon's cartoons in the *Chicago Tribune.* I believed every atrocity story invented by the British—the nuns used as bell clappers, the little girls with hands chopped off (because they threw stones at German soldiers), the martyrdom of Edith Cavell. God knows what I didn't believe. Every letter of Aunt Sue's from Paris told of horrors—destruction of the Rheims cathedral, desecration of Louvain, *Schreckenskrieg,* poisoned chocolates dropped by zeppelins (I was instructed never to accept chocolate from a stranger on the street), Big Berthas shelling orphanages.

Friday was War Savings Stamp day at Sumner School and I [illegible] a quarter to buy a big purple stamp and paste it into my stamp book. When I got one hundred purple stamps, I could turn the book in for a twenty-five-dollar Liberty Bond. Each Friday morning, I glanced around the classroom to see if anyone didn't buy stamps. The children who attended Sumner School were mostly poor. Nickels and dimes were scarce, quarters they never had. But on Friday, each had a coin or two, often pennies carefully tied up by their mother in the corner of a handkerchief. One boy (myself) had a small black leather coin purse with a metal clasp. There was a Swedish girl named Marie in my class who always seemed a bit older than the rest of us (in fifth grade she had real breasts). One Friday she had no money: "My mother said she didn't have any money for savings stamps," and she tossed her blond braids defensively. When I brought this news home, my mother and my aunt Mary exchanged looks. My father started to say something, but was shushed by my mother. I knew this meant a scandal not fit for children's ears and kept mine fine-tuned. Later that evening, I overheard a whispered exchange about Marie's mother. She kept a rooming house on Sixth Avenue around the corner from us. One of the roomers was a black man. "What do you expect from her kind?" my aunt remarked. "Something ought to be done." My mother solemnly agreed: "For the children's sake." The next evening, my father, dressed in his Home Guard uniform, and my uncle Andrew, solemn in a black suit, left the house. They returned a bit later looking pleased and closeted themselves with my mother and aunt. The following Friday, Marie appeared in class with a dollar bill and pushed to the head of the line, saying, "Put four purple stamps in my book. A whole dollar's worth!"

My mother and father and aunt often went to houses door to door, to be sure people were buying Victory Bonds. There were signs in front windows, saying: "We subscribed." And Red Cross stickers too. My father and my uncle Andrew thought well of the board of directors of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra when they drove from his position the respected conductor Emil Oberhoffer, who refused to drop German composers from the repertoire.

Of course, I ate spareribs with liberty cabbage instead of sauerkraut, and when I got sick it was with liberty measles. No voice was raised in dissent in our house when the teaching of German was banned by the Minneapolis public schools. My father and my uncle were fluent in German, enjoyed reading German novels

and switched to German if they were speaking of "naughty" matters (like the Swedish lady and her black roomer). But they abandoned the language except for an occasional *Donner und Blitzen, Dummkopf* or *Gott im Himmel.*

All this seemed right as rain to the small chauvinistic patriot who was me. I was not a thoughtful child and I enthusiastically joined the chorus of hate. I had never, I am certain, heard of the Bill of Rights or the First Amendment. I loved parades, especially military parades with lots of guns and bands, such as the Stars and Stripes Parade of August 16, 1917, not just an ordinary flag-waving demonstration. The Stars and Stripes Parade touched off—and was designed to touch off—a violent wave of xenophobic, prowar vigilantism in Minneapolis and in the state of Minnesota.

Its leader was a man named Fred B. Snyder. There were bands galore—the Donaldson's department store drum corps, Captain Sinclair and his bagpipe corps, the white-uniformed young women's marching corps of Dayton's department store, led by George D. Dayton himself, the Zurah Temple band, the Maccabees, Modern Woodmen, Shriners, uniformed firemen, the Pillsbury Flour Company band and the band of Glencoe, Minnesota, somewhat crippled because the bass drummer had beat his drum so vigorously both drumheads broke.

The martial music was matched by the martial oratory. On the parade grounds, Snyder whipped up the crowd against the officials of New Ulm, Minnesota, a German community in the southern part of the state, where a temperate attitude toward the war prevailed. "What shall we do with the copperheads?" Snyder demanded. "Shoot 'em! Hang 'em!" the crowd roared. Snyder wound up by pleading that "nothing should be left undone to win this war even though it requires harsh treatment of friends and neighbors."

The hit of the day was William H. Morris, described as "colored" by the *Minneapolis Journal.* He spoke for the "Black Sammies." He declared that the "Black Sammies" already in France and those about to follow would prove that "no braver, better, more patriotic loyal soldiers" had ever lived than the Sammies and that their guns and swords would "always be true to the country that has given them a voice in government for the first

Minnesota's governor, a lumbering Republican, J. A. A. Burnquist, had set up a Commission of Public Safety, which could supersede local officials and mayors. It was empowered to do anything it pleased with persons it accused of disloyalty. The powers of the commission make those of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy look like a kindergarten teacher's. Three days after the Stars and Stripes Parade, the commission ousted the town officers of New Ulm "so that liberty, equality and humanity might endure."

There was no pretense of constitutionality about the commission. One of its sponsors privately wrote Minnesota's Senator Knute Nelson: "The bill has teeth in it eighteen inches long. There are provisions in it that are unconstitutional and palpably so."

The commission closed saloons and dance halls in working-class areas. Soon it had created the Home Guard, in which my father enlisted, to "protect private property in this period of unrest and disorder."

My father's finest hour came when the Home Guard was ordered to break a streetcar strike in 1917. Issued a long oak ax handle and a nickel-plated pistol, he rode with strikebreaking motormen and, as he swore, cracked the skulls of strikers who tried to interfere. Put him in uniform, give him a weapon, issue an order, and even a gentle man like my father obeyed.

The commission published a weekly called *Minnesota in the War,* which was circulated to the public schools. The issues were loaded with atrocity stories and incitements against "pros," "traitors," "treason." No wonder my mind reverberated with the sadism of the Huns.

After the war, case after case came to light in which the Home Guard had led mobs against supposed traitors, particularly A. C. Townley's Nonpartisan League and the IWW. I grew up believing that the Nonpartisan League was a branch of the Kaiser's war apparatus and that the initials IWW stood for "I won't work."

So it was that the liberal state of Minnesota was transformed into a pre-fascist fief. The powers vested in the Minnesota Public Safety Commission were totalitarian powers; the commission established a dictatorship in Minnesota; the ideology of hatred, racism, xenophobia, was as naked as in Nazi Germany.

As a child, I understood nothing of this. Nor, so far as I can

see, did my father and mother and their friends. They believed the propaganda. My aunt Sue wrote my father that German agents every night were shooting American soldiers in the training camps, that spies were dug in so deep it would take years to root them out. These good people believed in the threat of "subversion from within." It never entered their minds that a groundwork for authoritarian rule was being laid under the cloak of "protection of democracy and liberty," as Fred B. Snyder so often declaimed.

The lesson of the Minnesota dictatorship is a frightening one, and it was not until I was preparing to write this book that I took a clear look at what was going on behind those red-white-and-blue banners of which I was so proud. It would have served me well if at least I had paid some heed to Fred B. Snyder, for he was to appear dramatically in my life during my years at the University of Minnesota. He was then, had been since 1914, and would until 1950 continue to be chairman of the University Board of Regents.

This lay to the future. With war's end, the hysteria slowly died, leaving me only a faint perception that something had been wrong, but I did not yet understand that it was America's own principles that had been savaged. I was beginning to be influenced by Henry Mencken, George Jean Nathan and *The American Mercury,* and I found in the banning of Heine, Schiller and Goethe, the silencing of Mozart, Beethoven and Bach, a comedy of the absurd which demonstrated the banality of the American booboisie. I never thought to question my own bigotry.

A decade after the war, I had become a cub reporter on the *Minneapolis Journal* and my first out-of-town assignment was to report a convention held at Austin, a small town in southern Minnesota. Not long before this, I had stood one afternoon in May 1927 beside a Morse telegraph operator in the city room of the *Journal* and listened as the sounder clicked away, a Prince Albert tobacco tin wedged against it to enhance the sound, and the operator typed out the news that Minnesota's Slim Lindbergh had made it to Le Bourget field in Paris. It was an extraordinary moment, the biggest moment for me since the armistice of November 7, 1918, the "false" armistice which I and everyone in Minneapolis thought had ended World War I. Now

came this remarkable adventure of the skinny young serious-eyed boy from Little Falls, Minnesota, flying alone across the Atlantic, landing precisely where he said he would, thirty-three hours and twenty-nine minutes after takeoff at Roosevelt Field, Long Island, carrying letters of introduction so that people in Paris would know who he was.

Lindbergh was light-years older than myself—that is, he was twenty-seven and I was eighteen—but I experienced a surge of empathy. But for . . . well, let's face it: I could never have flown across Lake Minnetonka, let alone the Atlantic, but my emotion was there, never quite to vanish.

On this hot evening in August 1928, I was sitting in a breezeless room of the Fox Hotel at Austin with half a dozen men in their upper thirties or forties, elderly in my eyes, members of the American Legion. These were Prohibition days and some had plain pint bottles of Minnesota Thirteen, the best moonshine whiskey in the state, distilled from a corn called Minnesota 13, developed by the State Agricultural Experiment Station. The rest of us were drinking spiked beer, that is, near beer, spiked with grain alcohol—hospital alcohol, we always called it. We poured off an inch of beer, poured in an inch of alcohol, put a thumb to the top, shook the bottle and drank.

The legionnaires were telling stories, mostly stories about the broads they had bedded—the Frenchwomen they claimed to have laid in Paris, whores in Chicago and Minneapolis, gang fucking in the nearby countryside and other brutalities. Lynchings—well, they hadn't actually killed a nigger. There weren't any niggers or hardly any niggers in Minnesota, but once, during the war, they had "run ol' man Lindbergh outa town."

I listened as they talked, tilting back the clean glass pints of Minnesota Thirteen, capping the near beer with a thumb, draining the brown bottles into gullets, sitting on the sagging beds, shirts unbuttoned, shirttails out, belching and farting, sitting and sweating and talking. Yup, old man Lindbergh had come to town, the election was on, shee-it, we wuzzin gonna let him get away with that shee-it, that goddamn commie pro bastud passafist. Agin the war. The boys got tugetha, got some tar and feathers, good olfashioned taranfeathers, chicken feathers, came up to the hotel, dragged that olbastud down to the street, pulled his pants right off, poured the tar on him, put the feathers on him

and run him outa town, right outa town. Took him on a truck down the road bout three miles and dumped him and that was the end of Lindbergh. Yup. That wuz plumb the end. He juskinda wentoff his rocker afta that, never made anutha speech, never heard anutha yip outa that olpassafist bastud.

What about Charley, what about Slim? I heard myself asking. One of the legionnaires took a long swig. Charley was justa kid. Can't blame his olman's craziness on Charley Lindbergh. Charley Lindbergh, he's one of the greatest. The greatest, fact of matter. The greatest. Was he here in town with the old man that night? I asked. Another pause. Damif I know, the legionnaire said. Seems to me he wuz. Course he wuz justa kid then. Yup. I kinda think he wuz here. Seems to me I remember him, cussin', cryin' and throwin' his fists around, and one of the boys had to take him aside an quieten him down. Yup. Kinda think that's what happened that night.

I woke up the next morning early. I had a black taste in my mouth. The sun was shining into my room and it was Sunday morning, the hotel very quiet. I still had the smell in my nostrils of vomit and sweat and alcohol and beer, and the noise of the legionnaires shouting, glasses smashing on the sidewalk outside, women giggling and screaming and the thumping of beds in the rooms next door, hours and hours of it after I left the old veterans with their bragging of great days, the fucking in Paris, the tarring and feathering in Minnesota.

I have searched out the records and they show that mobs trailed Charles Lindbergh, Sr., during his 1918 campaign for the Republican nomination for the Minnesota governorship. He was arrested on charges of conspiracy along with the Nonpartisan Leaguers; a rally at Madison, Minnesota, was broken up with fire hoses; he was hanged in effigy in Red Wing, dragged from the speaking platform, threatened with lynching, and he escaped from one town amid a volley of shots. I could find no record of an incident exactly matching the tale of the legionnaires; probably they exaggerated. What the record does show is the vicious, vituperative, life-threatening mob action against a man who had fought against the war but once we got into it had said: "A few would destroy democracy to win the war and the rest of us would win the war to establish democracy."

The image of the beer-bellied bullies of Austin floods back in [illegible] I hear patriotic flannelmouths ranting

against those whose protection is the sacred function of our democracy.

Ten years passed. The kidnapping, the Hauptmann trial, the self-exile to Europe, the trip to Moscow, dinners with Göring, the long days with Alexis Carrel, the Astors, Cliveden, and the speeches against America getting into World War II—people couldn't understand Lindbergh now. He didn't seem like the man who flew to Le Bourget, didn't seem like the kid who grew up in Little Falls, Minnesota, and quit the University of Wisconsin to be an aviator. The Lindbergh who joined General Robert E. Wood of Sears, Roebuck in the America First Committee, who belittled England's chances against Germany, who thought the Luftwaffe would smash Russia in six weeks, who made remarks about Jewish bankers and Jewish influence—this didn't sound like our American hero who rode up Broadway in the greatest ticker tape parade of all and then married Anne Morrow, the ambassador's daughter.

I did not get to know Lindbergh until the last years of his life. Lindbergh hated newspapers and reporters. He never forgave their scrofulous treatment of his family and himself at the time of the kidnapping, the Hauptmann trial and the afteryears, but for a long while he made an exception for *The New York Times.* Adolph Ochs had taken him up; the *Times* had exclusive rights to his articles about the flight and gave him all the profits; Deak Lyman, the *Times*'s aviation writer, became his personal friend and worked with him in the terrible kidnap days; but Lindbergh had not been in the Times Building since Mr. Ochs's death in 1935, until he lunched with me and Alden Whitman there a few times in the late sixties. He came only because he wanted to talk privately about conservation. There had been something mystical, almost pagan, in his relationship to the earth, his feeling for the sea, for continental space, for the crystalline upper air. No one had a more precise, exact, scientific and practical mind. It was this that made him a magnificent flier and gave him his remarkable grasp of aeronautic technology. He was both a theorist and a craftsman. He checked out a Hertz rental car at La Guardia Airport with the meticulous care he gave to the controls of a Boeing 707.

But science and technology were not enough. His mind was forever pushing the unknown regions that lay beyond demonstra-

ble fact. Now, at least partly through the stimulation of his son, Jon, he had come to see the threat man had brought upon his environment and particularly the danger implicit in aeronautics. His sense of concern had been raised to a pitch by the supersonic aircraft, with its potential for irreversible desiccation of the atmosphere.

Lindbergh was never a man to turn from cruel facts. He had made his decision. What was left of his life (very little, as it turned out), and all his determination (enormous) and world prestige (great), would be thrust into a struggle to save the earth he worshiped.

It was, I thought, a heroic decision, consistent with the heroic image he possessed of his role in society. He was prepared, if necessary, to go against the whole of that aviation which had been his life. It was the radical decision of a radical man, a man almost too complex to analyze but one whom I believed I understood. I was nourished in the same soil as he. I had lived close to those giants in the earth of which Rölvaag wrote, the giants that hurled and clawed at the generations which came first to Minnesota and the Dakotas from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. I knew now a good deal about Lindbergh's father, about the socialist agrarians of Sweden and Germany, the Nonpartisan League, the Farmer-Labor party, the passions, prejudices and hatreds that swept Minnesota in 1917 and after. I understood, I thought, why Slim Lindbergh, America's fair hero of 1927, had taken the same implacable stand against the majority, against war in 1939, that his father had taken against war in 1917. Others could assess the influences of Carrel, of the Astors, of Munich and Göring, of Truman Smith, of Hoover, Borah and Byrd, of the American politicians who sought to use Lindbergh. To me, he did not seem so different from the teenager who had watched his father, humiliated, defiled, run out of town by bully boys, driven to nervous breakdown because he had dared to stand up for his socialist principles and say what few other men in that day would say: that war was wrong, that America had no business entering Europe's quarrels, that it was, after all, a feud among greedy empires, a contest of lordly jackals over the corpses of ordinary men and women.

3 | 107 Royalston Avenue

To me, 107 Royalston Avenue was more than a house. It was the architecture of the legends that shaped my life.

I took a child's delight in the fact that each principal room of the house was finished in a different wood—oak for front hall and upstairs sitting room, cherry for Dr. Salisbury's library and consulting rooms (which my parents made their bedroom), ash for the dining room, white-painted pine for the parlor. And I took even more delight in the built-in cabinets, bookcases, mantels, cupboards and window seats. The heart of the house was my grandfather's library. At the age of five, I could circle the room without touching the floor, starting with the box couch, covered with a light kilim, hopping to a black wicker chair where my father sat when reading the paper or giving my sister and myself French lessons, then to an easy chair, upholstered in threadbare crimson, always called "the library chair." From its back I clambered to the bookcase where Shakespeare and Milton were kept and worked my way to a built-in writing desk, cluttered with bottles of black, blue and red ink, small pots of glue and paste. I dropped down to a seat below a window looking out on Royalston Avenue, then climbed a pyramid of bookcases, making toeholds by pushing back volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* ninth edition, in its handsome dark red binding, not yet beginning to peel. The cases were high and scary. It was like skirting a mountain cliff. Then a second window seat, the one where my father kept his architectural publications, another high case, and across to the fireplace mantel.

The mantel was a realm of magic—carved columns, beveled mirror, nooks and recesses. Above, almost beyond sight, stood a plaster bust of William Shakespeare with a small dent in his nose that always made me feel guilty, but I have no recollection of breaking it. The mantel was narrow and dangerous. The mirror, I believed, was the same as that through which Alice ventured in *Through the Looking Glass.* To me there was no barrier between the world of 107 Royalston Avenue and that of Alice, of *The Land of Oz,* of *Heidi* and *Back of the North Wind,* of *Pi-*

4 | The Ghetto

If anyone had told me that I was growing up in a ghetto, I would not have known what they meant. When I came home from my first day at Sumner School, my mother asked me about the children in my class. I said there were "five Sullivans." She was skeptical. So was my father. There were, in fact, five Solomons in my class. I knew no more of Jews than did my aunt Mary, growing up thirty years before in the Welsh community of the Western Avenue M.E. Church. She had a handsome young suitor, of whom she was very fond. One day a friend asked her, a bit hesitantly, if she knew that the young man was Jewish. "What do you mean?" my aunt asked. "Is that some kind of disease?"

In Miss MacPherson's first-grade classroom there were probably twenty-four children, of whom I suppose twenty were Jewish, one was black—a handsome boy named Booker T. Washington, who later became a professional singer—two were blond Scandinavian girls and one was myself. I do not believe any of us felt differences of creed, color or national origin. We wouldn't have understood that. Sumner School was about 95 percent Jewish, but years later, former classmates told me that neither they nor their parents had thought of it as a "Jewish" school. Nor did I. No one noticed that there were no Jewish teachers until, in 1918, Miss Levy appeared and took over grade three.

We all enjoyed the usual holidays—Christmas vacation, Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays, Easter vacation and, later on, Armistice Day, November 11. But the Jewish children got extra holidays—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover. On those days, our little band of four or five goyim huddled in the deserted classroom while our teacher tried to find a way to occupy us. Outside on Sixth Avenue, my friends walked with their parents in their best clothes, or played shinny and marbles. It wasn't fair. When I grew a bit older, three of us would be selected as "writers" and go to the big Keneseth Israel Temple, very Orthodox, escorted by serious men in black suits. There we would record the financial pledges, the names, addresses and

amounts. Writing was forbidden on the high holy days. For this we got a dollar. Almost every holiday, a worried old grandmother —a babushka, as I would come to say in Russia—would encounter me as I was walking home from school, grasp my wrist and ask me to light the stove in her kitchen. It was forbidden to light a fire until sundown, but if the little goy would do it she could get supper going. For this I got a nickel.

The nickels and dollars did not wash away the discrimination. I was a member of a small minority amid a large and powerful majority. We were friends, but there were lines I could not cross. School ended at three o'clock. I came home, had a glass of milk and a butter-and-sugar sandwich, and was ready to play. But my friends who went to *keder,* the Hebrew school, weren't free until five. I could see no reason, nor did they, why I shouldn't go to *keder* too. Finally, my mother went to the school and asked if I could be admitted. The rabbi was outraged. Positively not. This was not a school for the goyim.

In time I came to know a great deal about discrimination, about anti-Semitism in American country clubs and in the higher ranks of the Soviet government, about *numerus clausus* at Harvard and in the Academy of Science in Moscow. One of my childhood friends adopted a new, "non-Jewish" name and several of my Russian friends conveniently "lost" their internal passports and got new ones which specified their nationality as Russian, not Jewish. I had walked across the neatly kept ghetto in Warsaw, its carefully piled bricks and fresh-swept rubble marking where the streets and houses had been. I had met survivors of Auschwitz. I knew the results of the dirty little game that starts with "some of my best friends are Jews" and ends with extermination ovens. I went south in 1960 for the opening of the great struggle to bring America to live under the reality of our Constitution. I knew Malcolm X before he was murdered. I learned a good bit about the rawest edges of racism.

I hesitate to mention trivial childhood experiences in the context of the atrocities of our pseudo-civilized twentieth century, the rape and ravage of humanity which we have inflicted. Even so, let me say that it did me no harm and possibly a little good to suffer a teaspoon of discrimination. It was only a whiff, but it stuck in my nostrils and I grew up perhaps a fraction less racist than I would have been. I do not think it hurts to stand in the other fellow's shoes for a time. One of the glories of America is

that we do mix; we can't help it. We are a restless, transient people. We arrive as aliens, each with his own tongue, religion, color. There is no American accent. A Frenchman who goes to Germany is French to the end of his life. If he comes here, he is American from the moment he asks a New York cop the way to the subway. It is fashionable now to denigrate the melting pot; now we are all ethnics and we fight to preserve our ethnicity. Good. I am proud of the mixture and oddity of my ethnic background, the English, the Welsh, the Scots, the Dutch and heaven knows what else, but I bless fate for letting me grow up in the most alien corner of that most Middle Western city of Minneapolis.

That corner was bisected by Sixth Avenue North, the Broadway of our Russian-Jewish quarter. It began with Rappaport's grocery at Sixth Avenue and Royalston, the store where my mother sent me for a loaf of bread (five cents), a quart of milk (five cents), a dozen eggs (twenty cents). The bread came unwrapped, the milk in a bottle and the eggs in a brown bag. In winter, Rappaport's windows were plated with frost. Beside the nickeled cash register stood a jar as big as Sinbad's, filled with dill pickles swimming in brine like small carp. There were barrels of flour and barrels of crackers, bushels of potatoes, onions and turnips, which began to sprout toward the end of winter. I didn't like Rappaport's, possibly because my playmates said the Rappaports yelled at children about their parents' bills. Next door was a tailor. When my uncle Scott Evans made trips to Minneapolis, stopping at our house, I took his suits to be pressed—twenty-five cents for pants, fifty cents for a suit. I didn't like this shop either, its air one-half naphtha, one-half steam. Nor did I like my uncle when he threw me a bright half dollar as tip. I didn't like being treated as a bellboy and I liked myself even less for keeping the money.

The center of our neighborhood was the "Yiddish store," Brochin's, at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Lyndale, across from the synagogue. Mr. Brochin was Orthodox, a strong Zionist with gray beard and black skullcap. His store breathed garlic—I could smell it when I passed by—and was renowned for its peppered corned beef sandwiches an inch thick, its garlicky Bobruisk sausage, its white-and-green dill pickles and sharply spiced green tomatoes. There were wooden bins of fresh-baked

matzohs at Passover time; dried herring and sausage hung always from the ceiling. To the rear of the store were shelves of religious books, prayer shawls, mezuzahs and phylacteries. At Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year cards festooned the window. In this store I felt an alien. Here everyone spoke Yiddish and I was a goy. Here, I thought, were real Jews, Jews in black yarmulkes, with sidelocks and gray beards, women in gray shawls and black dresses who might have walked in from any village in the Pale. I could stand at the counter for ten minutes and no one would notice my blond presence. I didn't go into Brochin's often. Beyond it was Belzer's. A couple of years earlier Mr. Belzer had peddled fruit and vegetables door to door. Now he had his own store. In a room above was the Yiddish school. Then there was Hecker's, the kosher butcher. I watched Nathan Rosen letter the signs in Hecker's windows, carefully outlining and filling in with gold paint the Hebrew letters for "kosher," and later I watched the ritual slaughter of chickens. Farther up Sixth was Garfinkel's, where women brought in fresh horseradish roots and had them ground for Passover. That cost a nickel.

Down the street from Sumner School was Volkert's candy store. Volkert wore a beard and spoke fiercely, but no one was afraid of him. He lived off our pennies—penny candy, penny sticks of licorice, a penny handful of jelly beans, a penny's worth of horehound, penny grab bags. He sold "Brazil drink," a bit like cola, which I was forbidden to drink because my mother said it contained something very bad, by which she meant cocaine. Brazil drink cost two cents. You could buy valentines for a penny and miniature ice cream cones for three cents. Small bags of nibs or clay marbles cost two cents, aggies a nickel.

Beyond Sumner School was the Liberty Theater, where I saw the Pearl White serial, *The Perils of Pauline,* the whole sequence, almost peeing in my seat when Pearl was left until next week bound and gagged in the path of the onrushing express; or Pearl bound and gagged and about to be hurled from the railroad trestle; or Pearl with a revolver to her head and the police pounding at the door; or Pearl about to be thrown into the harbor, a weight tied to her feet. Poor Pearl! Lucky children! The Liberty Theater, ten cents admission, five cents for children plus one cent war tax. Charlie Chaplin in *Shoulder Arms,* Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks and Bill Hart. All the greats. And more for my classmates—Molly Picon and stars of the Yiddish theater,

Jewish recitals and concerts. Out farther on Sixth Avenue was the Labor Lyceum, the socialist center, where debates took place about Russia, about the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, about Samuel Gompers and the U.S. labor movement, about the political role of the immigrants. Of this I knew nothing, but later I was told by my old schoolmates that their families were divided into Reds and Whites, the Reds supporting the Revolution, the Whites against it. But their memories were muted. They could not recall being interested in these disputes; nor could they remember the arguments which embroiled their parents.

What they did remember and what I remembered was the life of the street: hitching my sled to the back of the horse-drawn sledges, running after the ice wagon in summer to pick up slivers, trailing the sprinkler wagons and letting the cold water spray over bare feet, picking soft tar from the pavement in the hot sun and chewing it (in place of Spearmint), my friends filling gunny sacks in winter with bits of coal dropped from the sledges.

In summer, the popcorn wagon came slowly around the curve, the steam whistle sounding, the popcorn man up to his waist in popcorn, endlessly shaking his wire basket over the gas flame, the horse halting as the kids gathered, a nickel a big white paper bag. And the waffle man. *The waffle man!* This was the event of my summer. He came seldom. Perhaps he was the only waffle man in town. I knew he was coming when I heard the sound of his bugle, silver and clear, beyond the corner; then the wagon came slowly into view, bigger than the popcorn wagon, nickel plate around the glass windows and a coal fire to heat the griddles. He made the waffles as we waited, dredging them in powdered sugar, we clutching our fifteen cents, clinging to the open window, observing his white surgeon's apron, his tall chef's cap, taller than the cap of the man who made pancakes in the window of Child's restaurant on Nicollet Avenue.

The street was alive even at night, when the bushwhackers came, the men crying: Extra! The first I remember was the *Titanic,* in the middle of the night, the terrible cry of the newsmen, the six-inch headlines, fat and black, the excitement of my father and mother, awakened after they had gone to bed. My God! Colonel Astor! Not his wife too! Not Mr. Guggenheim! Oh, Lord! The Strausses! Lord! I think I remember all that. I know I remember

the *Lusitania.* A terrible sound. Extra! Extra! Ah, cover, cover the eyes of the newspaper, as Mayakovsky said. The bushwhackers were the Cassandras of my childhood, the criers of terrible tidings.

With hardly an exception, my friends and playmates in grammar school were boys and girls of Russian-Jewish origin—the Rosens, the Ravitskys, the Besners, children of the tidal wave that after 1905 poured out of the Pale of Settlement, the area of forced Jewish residence in Belorussia, the western Ukraine, eastern Poland. The families were poor. They ate potatoes and cabbage. Not much meat. In winter, mothers "sewed in" their children, in long underwear. They wore little cotton bags of foul-smelling asafetida around their necks to ward off colds. Once a week we were taken to the basement of Sumner School and inspected for nits—that is, lice. The school nurse ran a steel-tooth comb through our hair. If nits were discovered, the hair was doused in kerosene and inspected daily for a week.

Poor the youngsters were, but the Czar's Russia could have given America no greater gift. The more I came to know Russia in my long years in that country, the more profligate I realized she was. Ivan the Terrible expelled from Russia his favorite, the Danish ambassador, for daring to ask permission to marry a Russian woman. No foreign infidel could take from the homeland Russia's pride, her Russian souls. The same was true under Stalin and even under Brezhnev. Yet no land had on a scale so colossal driven people out—native Slavs, Catholics, Jews. Millions of Jews had fled: physicists, composers, writers, philosophers—an asset without price. No people has contributed more to the progress, enlightenment and evolution of America than these outcasts. What Russia might have been had she not savaged her best children, driven them out, committed genocide against herself, generation after generation, regime after regime, time without end! Russia's tragedy, America's fortune.

The brightest boy in my class was a wizened child named Solomon Wasserman. Every day Mrs. MacPherson allowed us to choose one song to sing. Solomon would always propose "The Worst Is Yet to Come." His father was a junkman, who came down the alley with a small cart and a bony horse, a brass bell jangling, crying: "Rags! Old rags! Iron! Old iron!" Before World War I was over, he had his own business. His son became

a brilliant attorney, first in his class at the University of Minnesota. Most parents of my friends were tailors or handymen, or ran small stores. First they worked for someone and then they struck out on their own.

My mother thought our neighborhood was becoming a slum, but I don't believe she ever convinced my father of this. He saw Oak Lake as he had seen it with his father, planting the arbor-vitae tree and the red cedars on the lawn, putting in the thorn apple hedge, playing in amateur theatricals, the girls in Oriental costume and slant eyes, the boys in blackface, strumming their mandolins. To my playmates and their families, Oak Lake was a land beyond dreams. They had seen nothing like the Victorian houses, the lawns, the curving streets, the sidewalks and the elms in Bialystok or Pinsk. In the villages, they had lived in *izbas* of mud and reeds, with thatched roofs and clay floors. Now they occupied three thousand square feet in a mansion, bigger than the landlord's house. If your house backed up on the railroad yards, was anything more exciting?

They were right and Mother was wrong. Oak Lake was not a slum. True, the houses began to run down. They needed paint and the front steps sagged. The "best" families no longer lived here. The houses were divided into duplexes and then divided again. Ragged children played in the street and their parents spoke broken English. But what is a slum? A place of degradation, decay and despair? A den of crime? A breeder of disease of body and soul? Oak Lake was none of these. It acquired a character of its own. Certainly it was no longer the lace-curtain neighborhood it had been when my grandfather built his house, although at dusk it might look much the same. Gloom veiled the scars as I watched out the bay window and saw the lamplighter swing down Highland Avenue, pause at the lamp beside our lawn, snake his long pole under the glass and flip on the gas. Now the lamplighting of Oak Lake was let by contract to the Besikof family, poor, very recent immigrants who ran a tiny store on Lyndale Avenue. The lamplighting contract gave them status and they began their upward move. Soon there were two Jewish policemen on the force, named Cohen and Ginsberg, assigned to our neighborhood. But there was little crime. Oh, yes, occasionally a kid would swipe an apple or a banana at Belzer's or a handful of candy at Volkert's. There were family quarrels and Saturday night drunks.

Sumner was one of fifteen or twenty Minneapolis schools built in the 1880s of cream brick. We pupils considered it a very good school and I think it was, tough but not bad. The "bad" schools were Blaine and Grant, just adjacent. Probably the kids at these schools thought Sumner "very bad." I was small and wiry and tried to steer clear of bigger, tougher boys. There was a pecking order, based on size and strength. Big boys picked on me; I picked on kids my size or smaller and on a boy named Sam, who was bigger but slightly feeble of mind. We threw small stones or cinder at each other—the bigger boys at me; I at Sam and smaller kids, and so on. One afternoon, the worm turned. As I was dodging the pebbles of the older boys, Sam threw one and hit me on the forehead. This was lèse majesté. I threw a stone at Sam and hit a big boy. The big boys joyfully chased me from the schoolyard, over a fence and down a long alley. None of their stones caused any damage; Sam's had given me a good whack. It was O.K. for the older boys to go after me; but Sam had violated the rules. Unless I put him down, I would drop below him in the pecking order. I insisted that Reuben join me in ambushing Sam. Sam had to be given a lesson. Reuben couldn't understand, but came along because I was so excited. Soon Sam appeared, on his way home. We showered him with stones and he ran off crying. That settled the matter—so I thought. But the bruise on my face brought questions at home and I had to confess I had been fighting with Sam, deleting the rest of the story. My mother was outraged. She was not going to have her angel child assaulted by a ruffian. Father donned his Home Guard uniform. Uncle Andrew put on his black suit (by this time I knew it was his bill-collecting suit—he worked for a collection agency). Off they went "to have a little talk"—that is, to intimidate the parents of the addle-witted Sam. The mission was successful; Sam and I never fought again; but to this day I have a guilty conscience.

By now I was beginning to make discoveries. I got very good grades in school. I was held in high regard by my family. But on the street, it was wit and fists that counted. In the Jewish community of my friends I was a minority of one, but actually a cherished minority. Despite my separateness, I was protected. Over and above this was another level of protection, that of my family, and this stemmed from intangibles which I could only faintly perceive— something to do with our prestige. It was not wealth, although in the neighborhood of the poor we were rich. It

had to do with being a symbol of the greater community. In the city of Minneapolis our family was not distinguished. But in Oak Lake we were first.

By the time I was in third grade, I usually walked to school through the alley that bisected our block. Ice-clogged in winter and muddy in summer, it was my favorite route. Some families kept horses in their barns and many had chickens or pigeons. A rooster woke me every morning. There were several cows and two or three goats. And Smellakahorse. Smellakahorse was a stableman, but I don't think he worked for anyone. He lived in the alley and I never heard him called anything but Smellakahorse. He was a shifty, red-eyed man dressed in a ragged half-coat, horseman's breeches and patched boots. He slept with the horses in a stable and came down the alley with a bowlegged gait, and I suppose he was usually drunk. He was the only unclassified unemployed person I encountered regularly in my childhood. That does not count tramps. Tramps were normal. They came to the back door and offered to do chores for a handout. Sometimes, if Mother was in the mood, she would let them chop some wood, fix a storm door or rake the lawn, then let them sit in the kitchen and eat a plate of bacon and eggs or a sandwich. Sometimes she would give them a half loaf of bread and send them on their way. Sometimes she just slammed the door. Tramps were not men to be frightened of. They came and went and sometimes you were sorry for them, sometimes not. Gypsies were different. Gypsies were dangerous. They kidnapped children. They stole. They had camps, traveled in canvas-covered wagons and spoke a language of their own. When Gypsies appeared in the neighborhood, we ran home and told Mother and she locked the door.

I loved the alley. I liked backyards better than front yards; they gave me a feel of things. One afternoon in 1920, I saw the initials BYOL lettered in chalk on a back fence. I was disappointed to learn that they only meant Bring Your Own Liquor (Prohibition had set in). I had hoped they were a secret code. About the same time, I saw the initials KKK. I knew what they meant. The Klan was on the move in the Midwest. I had not been permitted to see *The Birth of a Nation.* Probably my mother thought it cheap and sensational. My mother's movie censorship was puzzling. She refused to let me see any Charlie Chaplin pictures. He was "vulgar." I was permitted to see Buster Keaton

and Harold Lloyd. Fatty Arbuckle was "cheap." Pola Negri was "too exciting for children." So was Erich von Stroheim. That meant too sexy. *Orphans of the Storm* was O.K.

When I saw the initials KKK on the fence, I began to look for Klan activity: robed men, burning crosses, night riders. I was disappointed. None appeared in our neighborhood. This did not mean I was anti-black, anti-Jewish or anti-Catholic; it reflected my passion for secret societies. I yearned to belong, as my grandfather Salisbury had, to the Masonic order and used to dress up in the attic in his Knights Templar embroidered hat, wear his ceremonial sash and silver-plated sword. I started a secret society and called it Kappa Kappa Kappa. I was the only non-Jewish member. We had a codebook, passwords and secret meetings. It was a bust. There wasn't any "secret," my friend Reuben couldn't remember the password and we had nothing to do at our meetings.

One winter day after I had started at North High, I was kicking through the slush in the alley and found a photograph on cardboard lying under an abandoned wagon frame. I picked it up and almost burned my fingers. It was a picture of a dark-haired young woman, bare to the waist. I had never seen a photograph of a naked woman and was so excited I almost jumped up and down. I hadn't imagined that such photos existed. I studied the full bare breasts, the nipples, the navel, in painful ecstasy. I didn't dare take it home. Nor did I want to lose it. I hid it carefully under the wagon box. The next day it was gone.

Sex had become an obsession to me and to my classmates. At Boy Scout camp that summer, one boy in my tent lay in bed all day and all night, playing with his penis. He didn't get up for reveille. He didn't go swimming. He didn't go to meals. He wore an embarrassed grin and told us he couldn't stop himself. It went on and on. We marveled at him. Boys from neighboring tents came to see. Finally, he was taken to the hospital. We shook our heads. It was an extreme case, but there was some of him in all of us.

In the study hall at North High, the pages of the big Webster's dictionary where the "dirty words" were located were grimy with our finger marks. I was an ardent Boy Scout and attended meetings of Troop 2 every Friday at the Church of the Redeemer, the Universalist church. Now the meetings acquired a new attraction. They were usually finished by a quarter to nine.

We—that is, four or five of the older boys—would run top speed a half mile across town to the Gayety burlesque theater on Washington Avenue. The oldest-looking boy bought second-balcony tickets and we raced up to "nigger heaven," looking straight down on the stage, and waited for Carrie Finnell, our idol. Carrie Finnell was a robust woman, the epitome of the beef trust. She came on stage, a shimmering sequin cape covering her extensive anatomy. To the traditional beat she began the classic divestiture, first the cape, revealing an equally sequined gown, slit to her hips, which were richly proportioned. Then off came elbow-length gloves and all the rest, until she stood center stage, as we Scouts, saliva dripping from our mouths, preposterously excited, held our breaths. She stood, the music silent, in a dazzling sequined cache-sexe, with glittering red-tasseled cones glued to the nipples of her great bosoms. She stood, an utterly magnificent woman, all haunch and paunch, belly and breast, shoulder and buttocks, thighs and pelvis and mane of peroxide hair. This was what we came for. The band struck up and Carrie Finnell did her bumps and grinds. Then, slowly at first, but with mounting speed, she began to gyrate her breasts, the glittering tassels whirling like spinning tops. Around and around the circumferential bosoms spun—clockwise. Then came a sharp break in the music. Another moment of silence. Around and around the breasts spun—counterclockwise. It was unreal, unbelievable, a miracle. We gasped for breath. A quick flash and she was gone. We Boy Scouts scampered down the stairs, with flushed faces, tumescent bodies, glazed eyes, numbed brains, to run full tilt to our comfortable, quiet, middle-class homes and apologize to our mothers for being a bit late because we had had to stay for some extra practice at making fire by friction.

The world I've written about is gone—gone with Oak Lake. The Liberty Theater is gone. Not a brick remains of Sumner School. There is no evidence that Brochin's store existed. The house where my friend Reuben lived disappeared long ago. So did the fire station Grandfather Evans built, the belching steamer and the troika of gray horses. All of it gone. And 107 Royalston lives only in my imagination. Not a stick, stone, tree, shrub. Not a gingerbread cornice or a granite block from the foundation. Even the alley is gone. Royalston Avenue survives in one signpost which leads nowhere. There is no street. The Russian-Jewish neighborhood today could be the landscape of Anywhere, U.S.A.—flat-top manufacturing plants, a warehouse or two, acres of blacktop, and vacant land grown up to weeds. The bulldozers came one day and left nothing. Well, that is not quite true. I did find a few feet of the old brick paving where Royalston Avenue began, warm red brick, the kind they don't use anymore.

One building survives. It is a vaguely Gothic structure set back from Floyd B. Olson Boulevard, the artery whose construction destroyed Sixth Avenue. It stands four blocks west of where Sumner School used to be. It is a building I know well and have known since a year or two after it was built, in 1915, and I began to visit it on Saturday mornings. This is the Sumner Branch Library.

In 1965, I went back to the library and spoke at its fiftieth anniversary. Mae Wessberg, long since Mrs. W. H. Hamilton of Dayton, Ohio, was there. She was the first librarian. Mayor Naftalin was there. So were many survivors of the old days. "It was our university," one man said. It was, too. Here they learned English in special classes and read the papers, both English and Yiddish. Here they learned to be Americans. A small building. It cost the Carnegie people $25,000.

I talked a bit that night about how the other kids and I used to struggle home with armloads of books. There was nothing like a library to us. A friend of mine in high school named Alice Gates wouldn't say yes when her husband-to-be proposed until he had answered positively her question: "Do you have your library card?" I talked to my old friends, so many of whom had roots in Russia, of my years in the Soviet Union and what a remarkable institution was our public library with its open shelves, no locks, no bars. I explained that in Moscow the libraries were closed institutions. The Lenin Library, the equivalent of the Library of Congress, was a citadel of security. Libraries there were like the three circles of hell. No ordinary person could use them, but a student or scholar with a certificate had access to ordinary books. That was the outer ring. Then there was a category of books for which you had to get special permission. That was the second ring. Then there were the books only those with security clearance could use, the third ring, books about Russia's own past, the political disputes and controversies of the Soviet years, books of the disgraced, the nonpersons—Khrushchev after his

fall, Stalin after his fall, anything about Trotsky or Bukharin or Radek or Zinoviev or Kamenev, the great figures of the Revolution. And to anything sensitive about Lenin or great areas of prerevolutionary history, there was no access. It was, I said, as though they had cut the great oak of Russian history at the base and then sawed off the limbs, one by one.

Here in the United States, you could walk into the Sumner Branch Library and read what you wanted. No questions asked. If they didn't have the book you wanted, they would get it. That, I said, was one of the elements of American strength and the genius of the American idea.

I surprised my old friends whose fathers and mothers had come from Russia. They knew the Sumner Library was an institution of marvels. But they had not realized how savagely Russia had crippled itself. I could not help thinking of the library's origin, the grant from the funds of the immigrant millionaire Andrew Carnegie. No matter what evils he committed in amassing his fortune, he had planted the best of acorns in the American soil. The Sumner Library had not cost enough to buy the wheels of a super-superbomber today or a thimbleful of nuclear explosive. But to me the contribution of the library to America's security outweighed all the MX's we might build. It had staying power. So did the people who learned to be Americans within its modest walls.

5 | Dr. Salisbury's Son

It was a crisp February Saturday, sun shining on a white world of snow new fallen, sky blue, no wind—the best of Minnesota days. I watched at the bay window for my father. Saturday was a half day at the factory, the Northern Bag Company, where he would work his whole life, starting out dark, thin, aristocratic, looking very young, working until, gray, worn, thin, tired, sad, bent, he died June 6, 1944, D-Day in Normandy, lingering only a few days after the stroke felled him as he walked out of the factory. I was at an American shuttle bombing base at Poltava, deep in the Ukraine, the cherry trees in blossom, hopelessly distant, when I got the news that he was ill; a few days later I was in Moscow, trying to figure out how to get back to Minneapolis. It was midafternoon and I was whiling away the time playing poker in the Metropol Hotel with my friends Bill Lawrence of *The New York Times,* Ed Angly of the *Chicago Sun,* Dave Nichol of the *Chicago Daily News* and Dick Lauterbach of *Life* magazine. Mike Handler, my UP colleague, walked into the room, motioned me over and said: "Your father is dead. The cable just came." "Thanks," I said, turned, picked up my hand and threw a chip into the pot.

Back on that diamond of a February day I saw my father coming around the curve of Royalston Avenue, walking fast, a steady countryman's gait, his head high, wearing a dark winter fedora and a velvet-collared black overcoat. All his life he wore fedoras, a woolly fedora in winter, a sleek gray fedora in spring and autumn; in June he donned a panama with black band and wore it until Labor Day. He was a Victorian in dress, and wore striped cambric shirts with detachable collars and starched cuffs, brass collar buttons, plain gold cuff links, and a small gold lion's head stickpin with a tiny ruby eye in dark blue, dark purple or dark, dark carmine figured silk ties. He preferred pin-stripe suits, and I never saw him with his coat and vest off in the office, even in steamy August. In summer he changed to tan linen suits, never baggy, never wrinkled. I thought he was very handsome with his Indian high cheekbones, aquiline nose, black hair,

ander Hamilton. Mother did a lot of research and my manuscript was heavily "edited" by my uncle Andrew. It ran a staggering three thousand words and won the prize, even though I had to cut it back to the specified limit of three hundred words. A big score for me.

I glowed in the praise of my mother and aunt. Each felt she had put me on the track. Their cozening was enjoyable and I got into the habit of writing. I knew how to do it. I liked it. When I went to high school I wrote, a bit languidly, always getting high marks in English composition, joining *The Polaris,* the North High weekly, sometimes writing satiric verse (very poor), more often editorials and essays (not too bad). In my senior year in high school, I made a fateful decision. Despite the embarrassment of sitting, the only male, in a room with sixty prospective young female secretaries, I took a course in typewriting and learned the touch system. This was probably my only achievement of those years. It would stand me in good stead all my life. When I went to Washington for United Press in the early New Deal days, I could write copy at sixty to seventy words a minute, fast enough to keep up with the teleprinter machines. No one in the bureau could do that. Don't ask me what I wrote at sixty words a minute. I wrote anything.

North Side High was not a ghetto school like Sumner School. Sumner had been a segregated school, segregated by religion, in a sense, but really by income. Everyone in the Sumner neighborhood was low income or poverty line. North High was not poor. It was a working-class school, a blue-collar school with a tincture of white collar. Here Scandinavian children predominated, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic, a few Finnish and a good many Germans. Jewish pupils formed an enclave, possibly of twenty-five percent; "old Americans" maybe ten percent. There were two blacks in my 1925 class. Two. Perhaps fifteen in a student body of eighteen hundred. "Integration" had not yet been thought of, and the tiny band of blacks in Minneapolis was, let us say, smothered by white students and white schools.

At North High as at Sumner, I was in a minority, having automatically joined the Jewish bloc. I didn't know any non-Jewish kids. In my senior year, through working on *The Polaris,* I met some Scandinavians who were to become lifelong friends. The most important member of my class and surely the most interesting I did not get to know for fifty years. To be certain, neither he nor I in 1925 had any notion that I would, as he wrote in my high school yearbook, actually become "a journalist and editor," and that he would become a revolutionary and a three-time candidate for the U.S. presidency. This classmate was Farrell Dobbs, who grew up near Keegans Lake, to the west of the Oak Lake Addition, his father a driver for the Pittsburgh Coal Company, whose yards lapped at the edge of Royalston Avenue. When we signed each other's yearbooks, I was a pimply kid just out of knee pants; he was a lanky young man who could hardly wait to get his graduation certificate and be on his own, earning money, marrying his high school sweetheart, Marvel Scholl, starting a family and beginning to climb the American ladder of success.

By a quirk of fate (of course, no good Marxist would put it that way), the Great Depression and a chance meeting with one of the Dunne brothers, the Trotskyite Teamsters Union leaders, Farrell, who didn't know what a trade union was, was swept up in the Minneapolis teamsters strike of 1934 and plunged into the wilder edges of revolutionary struggle. Farrell was the first presidential candidate I was to meet, but it was not until his career was over, the FBI at long last exposed in its undercover harassment of the Socialist Workers party (it beat anything I ever read about the Okhrana, the Czar's police, which used similar tactics against the Social Revolutionary party in Russia), and Trotsky long since murdered by Stalin's assassin—possibly because Trotsky resolutely ignored Farrell's sensible warnings about security—that I finally sat down with him and Marvel in their quiet home in Berkeley, California, and began to untangle the fifty years that had sent us along such differing paths.

There was something elusive here, some Minnesota connection that I still haven't quite figured out. Farrell Dobbs entered revolution on an absolutely flat trajectory. He came from a working-class family. He married young and he was out of a job. A strike started and before he knew it, he and Grant Dunne were leading one of the most revolutionary strikes ever conducted in the United States, all the other leaders having been arrested. On the spot they invented tactics never used before or since—flying squadrons, field headquarters that moved hour by hour, and even oftener, from one suddenly commandeered filling station to another. It was the high spot of Trotskyite action in the United

States—and Farrell had not even heard Trotsky's name a few weeks before. It was a passionate experience, and fifty years after the event, Marvel was still capable of flying into a rage against Eric Sevareid, or Arne, as he was still known in Minneapolis, because he and some other reporters didn't take her seriously. And she and Farrell never lost their anger at what they regarded as the equivocal ("traitorous") attitude of Minnesota's radical governor Floyd B. Olson toward the strike. I was a great supporter of Olson, which may be why when the strike was settled, in August 1934, I wrote from Washington a "plague on both your houses" letter to my parents in Minneapolis, commenting on the six deaths, the millions of dollars of business lost and the beating up of one of my friends, a reporter named Wiley Maloney, adding: "I trust that both employees and employers figure they won the honors and that all will be peaceful ever after." Or perhaps I was being tactful because I knew my father thought civil war was breaking out. He came close to being right.

I wish that more of my letters of this period had survived. I am not entirely satisfied that I stood so aloof from the social and political confrontations of Depression and early New Deal. In a letter written to an old UP friend, Wolf Larson, six days after Roosevelt's inauguration on March 4, 1933, I spoke of the violence, the Dearborn riots and many others, that had swept the country, and added that "even the arch-capitalists (with the exception of the *Chicago Tribune*) are tinged with at least the first faint blush of socialism and many of them openly admit it."

I expressed hope that "the suffering and starvation" of the people had not been in vain and that "a definite change in the system" would emerge. But I added that the UP was "a grand seat for viewing things over the world from the grandstand" and that "I think that after all the grandstand is the place I would rather view them from."

"I have been in the arena and close enough to smell the hot blood and it is not a pleasant thing," I added. This sounds as though, regardless of my feelings—my sympathies for the radicalism of Floyd B. Olson, for the underdogs of depression, for the demonstrators whom I had seen beaten and clubbed down by the Chicago police—I had taken my place on the sidelines. I was to be a reporter of events, not a participator in them. It was a role I would adhere to throughout my long journalistic career.

But it was not thoughts of revolution, not social or political issues, that filled my mind as I came to the end of my high school days. I was looking forward to the University of Minnesota, but had no clear idea of what I wanted to do. My father was not impressed with my writing. He was very hard up. He had sold 107 Royalston and it had been a disaster. He had had to take Saskatchewan farmlands in exchange; the land, in turn, had been traded for two run-down Minneapolis houses; he had mortgage payments on our Kenwood house and he didn't know where to turn. Tuition at the university was not high, fifteen dollars a quarter plus another three dollars in fees. But there were textbooks, streetcar fare, lunches, incidentals. It mounted up. Since I didn't know what I wanted to do and he didn't know what talent I had, he suggested that I go to work for a while or possibly enter the Dunwoody Institute where I could learn metalworking, carpentry or automobile maintenance. Not a bad idea. But Mother would have none of it. Her boy must go to the university. She threw a tantrum. Her tantrums were no small affairs. They were hurricanes, dangerous, deadly, chilling outbursts which scarred her life and that of my father. The hysterics went on for hours: frantic weeping, pounding against the bed, turning her back to her husband or anyone who tried to comfort her, a paroxysm totally without control. The attacks came like clockwork. One happened every Sunday, just about the time we were ready to sit down to dinner. There was one every holiday. There was one whenever a decision (such as my going to the university) was to be made. Or they could come out of a clear sky. She would just drop a dishrag while washing dishes and slam into her bedroom. She would get up from the dinner table and slam into her bedroom. She would be reading in the living room, get up and slam into the bedroom. It could be a word from me, a word from Janet, a word from her sister Mary, a word from Uncle Andy. But usually it was a word from my father. My sister and I often talked in secret about our mother. We decided Dad was too nice, too polite, too long-suffering. He should stamp his foot, slam the door himself, slap her in the face, walk out of the house. But these were useless prescriptions. His mother and father had ham-

Eric Severeid

Chapter III

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA sprawls over its many acres between the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. It is an excellent center of learning, as mass-production institutions go, and has produced in profusion football players and poets, scientists and embalmers, vast numbers of politicians, businessmen, farmers, dentists, and writers of advertising copy. It is a miniature of American life, faithfully accommodating the taxpayers of the state in all their ideas of what their children and their civilization should grow up to be. With a flick of the wrist you can turn the index of its catalogues and locate Plato or the latest manual on disassembling the Garand rifle. It is a city in itself, which like most American cities has grown by accretion without symmetry or plan, so that the visitor wanders in a kind of architectural Wonderland, passing in a few steps from a red-brick Victorian monstrosity to a functionally sleek structure of glass and steel. Some time back it became evident that the university would continue to grow, and some kind of pattern was required. The decision was obviously in favor of a compromise between factory and academic cloister, for the dominant theme is now that of massive, warehouselike buildings with Greek pillars attached to the front.

Students came from all the northwest states, and some came from distant nations seeking to profit by our excellence in special matters like dentistry or journalism. Regularly, once a week—on Thursday, as I remember—a noted speaker addressed thousands of students who sat with their books in their laps within the softly lighted Northrop Auditorium. Local political candidates stirred us up, and there were frequent academic or scientific conventions, but the highest pitch of general passion was generated by the Saturday afternoon football games. In my period at the school, our brawny Swedes and Poles and Germans developed a habit of winning every game, and our fame spread far and wide. These behemoths of the gridiron became national figures, and it was an honor to sit beside one of them in a class and to awaken him when the class was ended. This matter of sporting fame eventually began to get out of hand—the "downtown" sports writers seemed to have acquired as much authority over the university's policies as the regents—and I well remember the university president confessing that he prayed secretly for a football defeat.

There were a few pleasant knolls and bowers for the summertime, but the odor of automobile exhaust was likely to have predominance over that of lilacs; and in the winter students and professors alike were obliged to fortify themselves against the blasts that blew across the adjacent Mississippi by resorting to long underwear, stocking caps, mackinaws, and ski pants. One's eyes streamed with the cold, and the powder on the faces of the girls crystallized into ragged patches in a way that the editors of *Mademoiselle* would have to politely ignore. A railroad ran along the river's edge, and the tramps who established their "jungle" there used frequently to lie in the bushes for hours, peering toward the established nooks in the hope of observing a physical manifestation of undergraduate romance.

It was, all in all, an excellent school for those who were not wealthy; and most of us certainly were not—the records then showed that two thirds of the men were obliged to work part time in order to pay the very reasonable charges. Most of us came with firm and serious intent, and those who did not usually drifted out after a few terms. I came, like others, in the quest for first principles. Like most, I did not possess the exceptional intuitive powers by which some men can grasp the interrelation of contemporary phenomena and thus construct an ordered view of society without the discipline of organized study. Like all average brains, mine required the impulse that cannot be planned—a stray book, a disturbing remark, or the challenge of a great teacher who deliberately kicks at the self-starter with which every mental engine is presumably equipped.

I was twenty and, like most of my classmates of twenty, knew nothing. I strayed one day into a class on political first principles conducted by a young man named Benjamin Lippincott, disciple of the Greeks and of another, more articulate disciple, Harold Laski of London. Lippincott would survey us with darting eyes, a tinge of sardonic humor in his soft, mobile face. His method was

new to most of us. He would throw an idea into our midst and watch us struggle with it. In the Socratic manner he would challenge and play one of us off against the other.

"What is the State?"

Somebody would grope for a definition.

"All right—if that's the State, then what is the Government?

"What is Freedom? Do you consider yourself a free man, Mr. Smith? Suppose you are very tired and lie down on the sidewalk in Nicollet avenue. A policeman makes you get up. Has he interfered with your freedom? All right, the law does say so, but you didn't have a thing to do with making that law, did you? But you obey the law anyway—a law somebody made without asking whether you would agree. Does that make you a slave? And if not, why not?

"Ah, Mr. Jones, if the government can't tell a man where and how he has to work, that's freedom, is it? But suppose the man has to work in Mr. Ford's factory because there's no other job to be found and he doesn't want to starve. Is he still a free man?

"What is Equality? When everybody has an equal vote, you say? Well, now, Mr. Adams, why *should* everybody have an equal vote? Why should Mr. Ford, who employs thousands of people, who has properties all over America, have no more vote than a tramp, who has no responsibilities except to his own stomach?

"What is Anarchy? Is it the same thing as Socialism, or as Communism? Your answer, Mr. Smith, sounds as if Anarchy were more like Capitalism. Would you say this is a country of Anarchy?

"What is democracy? A republican form of government? But England does not have a republican form of government. Would you say then that England is not a democracy?"

So he would begin. At first, most of us were not only confused, but angry and resentful. Some did not come back to his classes. For those of us who stayed it was not an easy time, but it was wonderful. We were just discovering the exciting world of Ideas, the world of Theory and of Principle. Not having the capacity to work backward from phenomena and discover first principles, the only way I could ever understand my times was by going back to the political Genesis, the Greeks, and working my passage home. It was a long trip. We sailed and tacked through the Romans, the Churchmen of the Middle Ages, through Locke, Hume, Roger Williams, Jefferson, Tom Paine, Adam Smith, Rousseau, Voltaire, Burke, Hegel, Marx, Spencer, Marshall, Lenin, and

Trotsky. The wide channel dividing Washington from Lincoln became understandable; we were able to pin Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover to their proper points on the chart; we knew where Norman Thomas was and how he got there, and it became no trouble at all to distinguish between a Roosevelt and a Churchill or a Chamberlain. (The last two are so much alike at bottom!) Five thousand miles removed from it in space, we lived in angry intimacy with Fascism because it is a thing, first of all, of the mind. To change the metaphor, it was like learning a foreign language after one is grown. For a long time the words and phrases beat without effect upon the brain—then suddenly one day they all drop into place; one can understand, and he can speak.

But he continues to make mistakes, sometimes very grave mistakes. We did; my very articulate college generation of political liberals. We made some frightful mistakes, and the story of that is an integral part of the story of those last, dwindling years in America between the two great wars. The new war, when it came, was for us not merely a crisis in our physical lives but an intellectual and moral purgatory.

2

Now, when I read a novel of American campus life, or see a Hollywood version with its fair maidens in lovers' lane, dreamy-eyed youths in white flannels lolling under leafy boughs or lustily singing, arms about one another's shoulders, of their school's immortal glories and their own undying loyalty—when I come across all this I am astonished and unbelieving, or I have a faint twinge of nostalgia for a beautiful something I never knew. I remember only struggle, not so much the struggle of "working my way through" as the battle, in deadly earnest, with other students of different persuasion or of no persuasion, with the university authorities, with the American society of that time. I remember emotional exhaustion, not from singing about the "dear old college" but from public debate. I remember exhilarating triumphs and the most acute bitterness of my life. A class reunion is something I have never experienced. I would know few of the members of my class. Our loyalties were not defined by such simple categories. I remember only a small group of all the classes, of various ages, some from the college of liberal arts, others from law or medicine or agri-

culture—the small, intense group of my friends, cohesive by political conviction and solidified by struggle.

It would be possible, no doubt, and in an accepted tradition, to write of this university period with the humorous superiority of tolerant adulthood, to regard it as a natural manifestation of the naïve idealism of youth. It would be easier, but it would be an error of judgment in considering the recent history of America, for with my college generation a new thing developed: the "student movement," long a serious political factor in China and many European countries, became for the first time a reality in American affairs. We had a definite effect upon our times.

We were in revolt. Not in the manner of many preceding academic generations, not in any bohemian, individualistic sense of hating the smugness of middle-class life and mores. We sought no escape for our personal souls in new art forms or in any new concepts of emotional or sexual freedom. Those were minor matters to us. We believed passionately in freedom for men and in the integrity of the human personality, but we sought these ends, not by changing the individual, but by changing his environment, the way society—meaning chiefly economic society—was organized. For us there was no question of seeking new geographical frontiers, as our struggling forebears had done in their revolt. Even were that physically possible, to us it would have been mere escapism. We sought neither wealth nor fame, nor did we expect security and serenity in the end. The key to life in our times, we thought, was the relationship of a man to society in general and what a man did about it. To be otherwise was to be only half alive. We reasoned in reverse, compared with our fathers—not from ourselves to society, but from society to ourselves. We had to help change society and let private life take care of itself, and we knew that what we sought, the "good life" of the philosophers, would hardly be found in our lifetime. Nevertheless, viewing our fellows who concentrated solely on the narrow technique of their chosen professions, we had no neurotic sense of martyrdom. We did not feel sorry for ourselves; we felt sorry for the others.

If we were reformers, it was not in the old-fashioned, Lincoln Steffens sense. The reformation of local government, the putting of "honesty" into public affairs, seemed an outdated, fruitless, and inconsequential matter to us. We were concerned with the whole underlying motivation of public affairs, on national and world scales, with the forces that produced the phenomena we observed.

The methods would have to be the methods of election and legislation, of large-scale organization, of mass meeting and strike and protest parade. The methods of the Christian Church in worldly matters we wrote off very early as ineffectual, and we had nothing but contempt for approaches such as that of the Oxford Movement, which would deal with dictatorship by improving the dictators and with capitalism by making capitalists better men. No one ever got our vote for a public-office holder by proving the man's personal sincerity. Hitler was sincere enough. What mattered was the force, the movement, the set of ideas the man represented.

To a degree, no doubt, we were sentimentalists, as so many liberals are. The man who labored with his hands became in our minds a more precious human entity, endowed—by us—with greater personal virtues. Had we ourselves been born among industrial workers we would have escaped this illusion. Still, this sensation showed that we had bridged a psychological gulf which the great majority of people never cross, for it is generally true, in all countries, that members of one social class are quite unable to feel personal sympathy for the pains of members of another class. This is true of capitalists toward workmen and vice versa. As our small group began to have obvious effect on the life of this enormous university, we were explained, our behavior was rationalized in various ways. To the psychologist it was a simple pattern —we suffered from hidden inferiority complexes and were trying to compensate by taking it out on a society that frightened us. This would not serve, since nearly all of us, certainly all the members of our exclusive "Jacobin Club," had won high academic laurels in the competition of our classrooms, we had athletic heroes among us, and we knew perfectly well that we could compete successfully in the professional worlds most of us were preparing to enter. If anything, we suffered from a superiority complex. To a tolerant businessman like my own father it was a simple phenomenon of growth: "If a man isn't a socialist at twenty and a conservative at forty, there's something wrong with him"—a phrase that particularly maddened me. To the conservative students of law who dabbled in politics for reasons of professional advancement, we were simply fellow-travelers of the university and downtown Communists and were really dancing on the end of their invisible wires. But we knew the Communists well enough—much better than our critics did—and understood their methods clearly; and, while we

frequently worked with them, we never worked under them. We disbelieved their methods and program because we understood far more about the peculiar nature of American society than they did. It just would not work in this country. Furthermore, with two or three exceptions it was hard to like them personally. They were —most of them—obvious examples of the inferiority complex. Either by nature or as a fetish, they were uncleanly. They were definitely antisocial in a personal sense, quite humorless, and complete bores. We did not adhere to the strict line of any party allegiance. Philosophically and in our contemplation of the economic riddle, we were socialists; in state politics, we would vote Farmer-Labor; and nationally we supported Roosevelt. We were opportunists in the sense that we would use any lawful means, however diverse, to achieve a cohesive end.

It was true that Minnesota, politically speaking, was an exceptional state. It had a long third-party tradition, antedating most of the Progressive movement next door in Wisconsin, beginning far back in Civil War times with that truly remarkable agrarian revolter and scholar, Ignatius Donnelly, who organized farmers' revolts against the railroad and milling trusts one year and lectured at Oxford and Cambridge on Shakespeare the next. One of the great personalities of American history, now buried in oblivion. In the tradition was the elder Lindbergh, who was hated by "the interests," persecuted by the St. Paul and Minneapolis press, and stoned by mobs when he attempted to speak against American entry into the First World War. The contemporary successor of these men, the inheritor of the mantle, was Floyd B. Olson, three times governor of the state, a towering, fearless, extraordinarily able man with a hard eye, a tough manner, and traces of bitterness remaining from an impoverished childhood, but a man who loved people and devoted his life to the defense of the poor. He was almost certainly America's greatest political orator of that time, not excepting Franklin Roosevelt. To his office we as students always had access. He hated the stuffed shirts of the university as much as he hated them anywhere, and he gave us public as well as private support. His conservative opponents, incapable of understanding that ideals are a reality with some men, accused him of lining his own pockets as governor. He died very young of cancer, quite penniless, just as he was about to go to the United States Senate. He was our particular hero.

Doubtless we had absorbed by propinquity some of this purely local nonconformism, but state affairs were really a secondary matter for us, merely an accessible theater in which to perform the roles we had learned in the great books and by our own analysis of economic society, then so clearly in a state of collapse all around us. We were part of a nationwide student revolt.

These were the years of the tragic Depression, produced in part by the first war and removed, as it was to happen, only by the imperatives of the next. We observed bread lines from the street car as we went to school carrying the books that described the good society. We duly listened to lectures on orthodox economics, which explained the "natural laws" of capitalist competition, which would, if not interfered with, ultimately produce the general good by permitting everyone to pursue his selfish ends unhindered. And every day the headlines spoke of riots, of millions thrown out of work, of mass migrations by the desperate. All this was happening in the richest country on earth, a country that possessed all the political rights and instruments by which free men could change their condition—and still they could not prevent this. Meanwhile the experts on orthodoxy droned away: "The mobility and immobility of labor"—"The price of labor." Labor, under the competitive conception, was merely a budgetary item, to be added and subtracted, moved around like machine tools or money capital. The whole fabrication had a dreamlike quality about it; it had no connection with the painful reality we could see out of the classroom windows.

Fellow Jacobin Sherman Dryer would raise an indignant finger. "But, sir, it wouldn't work, to do it that way. There would be revolution."

Professor Garver (co-author of *The Principles of Economics*, studied in all languages including the Scandinavian) would peer over his glasses. "We are not concerned with other forces, including the political, Mr. Dryer. We are concerned only with the basic laws of economics."

It simply made no sense to us. There were no immutable "laws"—or damned few—about it. Economics was not a "science" at all; it was fruitless to treat it as such, and to study it as a special, exclusive field. It was all mixed up with politics, with sociology, with geography and a good many other things. Clearly the "economic laws" of competition were a fantastic delusion, merely an

elaborate effort to justify things as they were by the invention of supposedly unchangeable forces which men mustn't attempt to interfere with. It seemed to us as much of a hoax as the medieval scholars' explanation of kingly authority as something derived from God. The system did not work, and if it did not work in America it certainly would not work anywhere. We knew from the history books that even in the famously "prosperous" times of the Victorian era, millions in England and elsewhere labored under insecurity and the most abject conditions of life. We believed the system had worked with passable success in the United States partly because the frontiers were constantly expanding; but even in those days it had frequently collapsed, and once had been rescued by the invention of the automobile which made a basic change in our pattern of living. But the frontiers were gone, and it was senseless to rely on mere chance.

When a Republican candidate for governor spoke to the Student Forum and declared with pride: "Why, the United States has gone through *fifty-two* economic depressions!" we screamed with delight at his unintentional indictment of the system.

No, it was clear that the system contained a basic flaw which invalidated the whole thing. The matter of production, we could see, was solved. Capitalism could produce overwhelmingly; but periodically, at the height of its production, it collapsed because it provided no certain, continuing method for getting the product into the hands of the mass of people. It could not *direct* its efforts to any channel, nor switch its accumulation of capital investment toward anything except that which happened at the moment to be profitable. That might be the manufacture of "Rendezvous" perfume instead of shoes, regardless of the fact that millions needed shoes and didn't care how they smelled. And thus came periodically the drive for export markets, the sending of machinery and whole factories after consumer goods, the political control necessary to safeguard the capital investments—in other words, Imperialism as an escape from domestic crisis that the system could not solve. Then the collision of expanding and competing empires, and thus war—all wars, we thought.

At the moment crops were being plowed under, and millions suffered from malnutrition. Doctors were impoverished, and hundreds of thousands lacked proper medical care. Teachers were on the breadlines, and vast sections of the country were populated by illiterates. To us, it was all a mess. We refused to accept it as

inevitable, untouchable. Men were *not*, regardless of all the determinists, the helpless victims of uncontrollable forces. We did not live in an age of superstition, worshipping the mysteries. Men could take hold of the system and direct it. But they had to be taught to understand it, encouraged to organize, and they had to be led. We didn't like the leaders we observed in political life, and we didn't like the university authorities, who we thought were merely serving the system and not the cause of truth. (I fear we did them a little less than justice.)

The university was in a state of intellectual ferment, and we were fortunate to be students at this particular moment. The gaunt brick structures with their fake Grecian façades did not even look like ivory towers on the outside. The place was a kind of fortress for us, and periodically we sallied forth to do battle with evil. We enjoyed the privilege of having little to lose. Before we had even studied much about the function of the American labor movement, many of us had trudged around factories bearing strike placards to the mystified annoyance of the employers who couldn't see what the hell we had to do with it. In the summer of 1934 the two cities were thrown into uproar by the famous truck drivers' strike, led by the Dunne brothers, Trotskyists, who organized the strike as none had been organized before in American labor history. They had patrol cars of their own, stopping trucks entering or leaving the city, a daily strike newspaper, loud-speaker broadcasts, a commissary, and medical and ambulance services for their wounded. When they put on a funeral procession for one of their fallen, the life of the business district came to a stop on the streets.

1934

I went to work as reporter for the Minneapolis *Star* to cover the strike. Some of the boys from the Greek fraternities on the campus joined the police and Citizens' Alliance forces with baseball bats on their shoulders, in defense of what they regarded as law and order. Some of my little crowd joined the strikers, in noncombative functions. Most of us, be it confessed, were not of the type that is willing to fight for its beliefs with brickbat or club. Fellow Jacobin Dick Scammon, son of the medical dean, was different; he was of the stuff from which true leaders are made. He was six feet four, weighed two hundred and sixty pounds, ate, drank, and sang with rabelaisian gusto, and belonged to thirteen political organizations before he could vote; he had a prodigious memory and thought so much faster and more incisively than his classmates that he could sleep through most of his courses. (Harold Laski told me in

London during the blitz that he regarded Scammon as the ablest American student he ever had.) Dick could swing a club, if he were convinced there was no other resort. We were all morally courageous, but he had physical courage.

The whole city divided in its sympathies. The *Star* was reasonably fair in its running account of what became a minor civil war, but the other newspapers were not. The police chief also worked on behalf of the employers, believing with them that "order" meant tranquillity no matter what kind of order it was. So the police took measures more lawless than those of the strikers to enforce their conception of order. There were fights every day, and mostly the victims were strikers. When a prominent businessman, who had gone into the streets with a club, was himself struck down by a picketer's club, the conservative newspapers went wild. Strikers could get hurt, and so could policemen, but *this* could not happen. This extraordinary reaction disturbed me very much. Why was this man with his white collar a human reality to a big section of the community while the truck drivers in blue shirts were not? Had class allegiance got so deeply into the blood of democratic America?

The police set a deliberate trap one day. The truck drivers walked squarely into it, and fifty or more of them were shot down with buckshot. According to the *Journal* the police had been "literally fighting for their lives." The results showed that one policeman had been hurt, while the nurses at the city hospital that night demonstrated to me that nearly all the injured strikers had wounds in the backs of their heads, arms, legs, and shoulders: they had been shot while trying to run out of the ambush. Suddenly I knew, I understood deep in my bones and blood what Fascism was. I had learned the lesson in such a way that I could never forget it, and I had learned it in the precise area which is psychologically the most removed from the troubles of Europe—in the heart of the Middle West. I went home, as close to becoming a practising revolutionary as one of my noncombative instincts could ever get.

My father sat on the screened porch, staring at the newspaper headline. His face was pale. "This—this—is *revolution*!" he said to me.

"Well," I flung out recklessly, "if it is, maybe we'd better make the most of it."

To my consternation, he let the paper slip from his fingers, put his leonine head in his hands, and in a husky, uncertain voice said: "I did not ever think that one of my sons would become a revolutionary." I had never seen him so deeply shaken since the day, years before, when Duff Aaker died. I had not understood that to some people like my father, the institutions of public order, no matter what kind of social system they reinforced, were endowed with a religious sanctity.

3

Of all the instruments designed to uphold the existing order, I think we most hated the military establishment. We would still have opposed it on this ground, but with less personal revulsion had we not been forced against our will to "take" military training at the University of Minnesota, for there seemed to be a law hanging over from Civil War days which made it necessary for any boy striving for an education at the people's university to don a hand-me-down uniform and shoulder a 1905 unfireable Springfield rifle three times a week for a full two years. Most of us resented this as an unrecoverable loss of precious hours before we learned to look upon the whole proceeding as a harsh interference with our liberty and a humiliating affront to our personal dignity. To me there was something revoltingly ignoble about the process of jerking my arms and legs this way and that on the shouted orders of a beetle-browed sergeant toward whom I felt an infinite intellectual superiority. True, when marching at the flank of a column (I was usually the tallest in the platoon) on inspection parade, I had a thrilling feeling of being part of a living, irresistible force; but this was a fleeting sensation, despised later as part of the seductive paraphernalia of the plot, along with the flags and music and shining brass, to lure us into feeling that training for murder was really something else. It is possible we would have felt less animosity if we had known we were really learning something, however ignoble; but partly because the system was compulsory and the officers did not have to compete for customers, the ROTC duty had become for most of them merely a soporific sabbatical from real work, and in the basic two-year course they taught us nothing. We never once even fired a gun.

My first officer was a Major John Hester of West Point (to us a

hideous barracks designed to make citizens of a democracy unlearn all they knew of man's right to freedom). I saw him merely as a type, not as an individual human being. "Look at those boring eyes, that severe jaw," I said to myself. "The human automata. The military caste. The negation of the free personality. Listen to this talk about 'discipline.' They don't think. They press a button and a mechanical device starts clicking. Well, they won't turn *me* into that." (Several years later I sat on a log in a fortified forest with General Hester, an intelligent, compassionate man.)

At the end of the basic course one of the officers tried to persuade me to continue and become a cadet officer, but I would have none of it. As time went on, the ROTC officers came to regard me as their enemy and listed me as one of the "campus reds" who were trying to undermine the republic. Jacobin Phil Potter, editor of the university daily, was carrying on a vigorous campaign to end the compulsory aspect of military training, and we all pitched in. When a brilliant philosophy student named Kaplan was suspended from school for skipping his military classes, I got hold of the story and we made an issue of it. This forced a "trial" for Kaplan before a tribunal of officers, with Dick Scammon as Kaplan's self-appointed defense attorney. The officers took their secret verdict of guilty to President Coffman, who overruled them and reinstated the student—much to their embarrassment, which was made acute when I learned the details and published the story. After that the officers detested me, and, although I did not realize it, I had made an unforgiving enemy of the cautious president, much to my loss later on.

There was a wild scene in the university recreation building one afternoon when two or three hundred students assembled to debate the "Oxford Oath," which in its American version (then going the rounds of the colleges) solemnly pledged: "I will not bear arms for flag or country." Dick smashed his gavel on the table and bellowed the shouting crowd into a semblance of order. We accepted the pledge overwhelmingly, and I voted for it along with the others. The only thing that disturbed my peace of mind was a lasting memory of a tall young man in uniform—I believe he was the Cadet Colonel—rising with simple dignity, facing the hostile crowd, and saying: "If we are to enjoy the privileges of democracy, as you are in this meeting, why should we not be willing to defend it?"

There seemed no immediate threat of war at that time, but our

"peace strikes" and meetings were frequent and passionately sincere. The president refused us use of the big auditorium for these mass meetings, so we gathered on the steps. Jacobin Lee Loevinger, distinguished student in science and law, smacked fist upon palm and shouted: "And next time, when they come and tell us we must invade the land of some other, some equally innocent and misguided people, to 'defend our wives and sweethearts,' we know what we will do—we shall defend them by preserving our lives, by staying at home with them. We will not listen to the scream for slaughter." (Brilliant Lee Loevinger, who went as an officer with the first naval mission to England.) Governor Olson spoke from those same steps of the forbidden auditorium, delighting in the knowledge that the embarrassed university president was looking down from his adjoining office.

Very few of us were conscientious objectors to war in the true, religious sense. We had no thought of working for a violent overthrow of the government itself either by removing its internal military defense or by encouraging its defeat by a foreign power. We believed that "preparedness," as the history of warring countries proved, was no guarantee of peace—that it would be, in fact, a force for easier involvement. We refused to believe that *any* people in the world desired war, with us or with their neighbors In any case, modern war was a product of the collapsing capitalistic system and the collision of its imperialisms and was encouraged and desired only by the professional military, financiers, and munitions makers, who were associated in a kind of loose but real conspiracy against the innocent people of every land. The whole effort, the whole meaning of our own lives in our time must be to improve the material and spiritual condition of man in society, and war was the negation of all this. A new war would mean the end of all we believed we lived for, and perhaps destroy forever all that the great men of our books had envisioned, all the progress toward decency and a common brotherhood that the human mind had achieved throughout the painful centuries. So we passionately felt. Why, at this portentous moment of history, the early 'thirties, did we say what we said and thus help to mislead our people, do what we successfully did about military training, and thus help, however minutely, to disarm our country? We, along with college men and women all over America, were involved in an astonishing paradox.

Lessons of the past have greater power over the mind than any

forecast of the future, even if the lessons be conceived in error. We came along at the peak of the intellectual revulsion against the First World War. We felt ashamed, ashamed for our fathers and uncles. We were revolted by the stories of the mass hysteria of 1917, the beating of German saloonkeepers, the weird spy hunts, the stoning of pacifists, the arrests of conscientious objectors. As enlightened scholars, we considered that the professors of 1917 had degraded themselves and their sacred function by inventing preposterous theories about the essential depravity of the German race, the worthlessness of their art, and the hidden evil of their music. We refused to believe that war was the responsibility of Germany or any single country. We plowed through the pages of Fay and were convinced that there were no basic issues involved and that with a little intelligence and forbearance war could easily have been averted. Britain and France had acted as stupidly as Germany; no country had had any serious designs to rule Europe, let alone the world. America had been driven into the war by hysteria over the *Lusitania* and other incidents, by the diabolical propaganda of the Allies, particularly the British, who, our studies proved, had controlled most of the means of world communications. Our teachers of journalism exhibited innumerable posters from that time, depicting the German soldier as a grinning ape. We laughed bitter laughter over the propaganda stories of the "crucified Canadian soldier" and the little Belgian children with their hands cut off by the Germans. Contemporary research had proved there was no evidence to support these stories. We read with eagerness the new books purporting to expose the munitions racket and accepted all their implications. We cheered Senator Nye in his fight for the Neutrality Act long and loudly. We were excited over the newly unearthed and published dispatches from the wartime American ambassador in London, who mentioned the risk to American loans and investments unless we came into the war.

The conduct of the war itself, with the years of stalemate, the meaningless, slaughterous attempts by bankrupt generals to hang on to their jobs a little longer by sending thousands to certain death in order to gain a hundred yards of mud—all this chilled our marrow and made us, we thought, very wise. We read *Three Soldiers*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and *Death of a Hero* with compassion and a sick feeling in our stomachs. We were

young, and to those just beginning to taste the wonderful flavors of life the idea of death is a stark tragedy of unutterable horror. "To make the world safe for democracy!" Where was democracy now? It had perished in Italy, and was now finding violent death in Germany—a direct result, we believed, of that incredibly useless war. Men talked about the ennobling effects of fighting as comrades, about what military discipline had done for the character. We despised the organized veterans we saw, with their greedy lobby, their beery, boisterous annual conventions. We had more scorn than pity for the Gold Star Mothers. As a grim jest we joined the "Veterans of Future Wars." We began to detest the very word "patriotism," which we considered to be debased, to be a synonym for chauvinism, a cheap medallion with which to decorate and justify a corpse.

We regarded the uniform as a convict suit, worn by inmates of the prison house of the human spirit, and we despised all those who voluntarily donned it. We could not swallow the pose adopted by professional military men—"We hate war even more than you because we know what it is like." When an aging American general came to speak in the auditorium, we reprinted an extract from his memoirs in which he related with pride how he had sent men into combat—where many died—a few hours before the Armistice he had known was due. They couldn't kid us. Men could not spend half a lifetime training for a particular job and not wish for the opportunity to do the job and cover themselves with glory in the doing. With all their pretenses, we knew that in their hearts the professional fighters wanted war, enjoyed war. We hated them for it.

In general, war came from the economic system, from the conspiratorial efforts of a few occult groups, and from ignorant distrust and fear between peoples. Therefore the duty of the enlightened citizen was to change the system, to expose the conspiracies, and to create trust, beginning at home by refusing to rearm ourselves and making contact with other student and anti-war groups and forces abroad.

The paradox grows more mysterious when one remembers that all this was going on in our heads simultaneously with the coming to power of Adolf Hitler. It is more unfathomable when one considers that we, who had a germinal sense of democracy and freedom, understood the real nature of Fascism much earlier than did

the public authorities in our country and in Europe's democracies, much more clearly than did the conventional students around us who went in for voluntary military training as a matter of routine. The actions of Hitler were being justified on all sides by a lot of people who believed in capitalism, in preparedness, in all the conventional ideas, as merely a necessary attempt to bring "order" into German life, and to give the Germans, frustrated by the mistaken terms of the Versailles Treaty, a sense of dignity and place in the world. These people were inclined to approve the Nazis as a "stabilizing" force. But we who had learned from history what the long struggle toward an age of reason implied knew the moment the Nazis burned the books that Fascism wanted war. We knew it in our bones. Why did we not immediately go all out for preparedness? Were we short on facts? Did we feel that, because the French had the "greatest army in the world" and the British the greatest navy, Hitler could be cowed or contained? I think perhaps we did. We were quite ignorant of the true designs of Japan, as were our diplomatic authorities, and while we began to accept with dismay the probability of a European war, we remained desperately anxious to keep America out of it, to preserve at least one oasis of sanity in an insane world. We grasped the implications of Fascism, but we failed to comprehend the *scale* of the thing, to understand that a *world* conspiracy was under way. We kept on, with our kind of methods to insure peace and—we thought—to save our own lives.

We continued to hope against hope that Hitler could be killed by organized pressure from the democracies of Europe who must —but did not—unite. We put great hopes in the German Socialists and Communists, believing with naïveté that the truth is strong by itself and cannot lose in the end. From all that we had been taught about the first war, we still conceived of the Germans as unwilling victims of the imperatives of desperate capitalism. We still believed that the mass of ordinary men was the same in all countries, with the same basic desires and needs and the same repugnance for war. If the Germans marched and goose-stepped it was merely because they were directed into it; we could not conceive that a whole people *could* be different, that they could actually *like* to goose-step. Surely all men wanted security above all else. It did not occur to us for a moment that whole masses of men could grow tired of security and consciously desire another kind of life. Fascism meant war, but, instead of accepting war as

inevitable, the thing to do was to stop Fascism this side of war. For America the task was to keep the ink fresh, the microphones hot. We did not think about keeping the powder dry. The smell of powder made us sick.

4

We tried to apply our general ideas about human society to the specific world of the university. I doubt if our families and the public ever realized the deadly earnestness of "campus politics" and the appalling amount of time and energy students put into its practice. As in most state universities the authorities encouraged a modicum of "student government" as a kind of harmless training, always making sure to retain final control themselves. Hitherto, the machinery of student elections to various organizations and the organizations themselves had been the special preserve of the permanent fraternities and sororities, whose real leaders were frequently found among senior students in the law school. A small group of these men usually controlled all nominations by the dominant "party," which was essentially conservative, never dreaming of seriously challenging the university authorities on any real issue. They parceled out the elective honors to the Greek houses as a reward for party loyalty, arbitrarily deciding the class officers, for example, and which girls would have the honors of which places in line for the "grand march" of the class proms and balls. The award of these prerogatives was cause for endless conniving, bitter animosities, and the most acute heartburning imaginable. The most successful exponent of campus politics in years was a law student named Harold Stassen, who had been graduated two or three years previously and whose name was still a byword for political skill. But the coming of the new academic era with its intense concern over economic reform, over the issue of military preparedness and peace, edged our wooden swords with steel, and the battle seemed very real indeed. The Greek houses suddenly discovered that while they had been immersed in such matters as the class proms, other students by some diabolical and mysterious means had overreached them and were controlling the really vital instruments—the daily newspaper, the literary review, the law review, the board of publications, the student council, and so on. At the bottom of all this was the Jacobin Club, formed by

ten or twelve of us who were in general revolt against things as they were. The Greek houses first learned of our organized existence when we were included with the regular fraternities in the quarterly list of academic standings, and they found us at the top of the list with a scholastic average higher than any fraternity had established in thirty years. We became suspect among the conventional conformists and very quickly feared by the university administration. We very nearly succeeded—we thought—in making student government truly that, and did succeed in abolishing compulsory military training, the most important issue of all. In the midst of this campaign, the authorities were forced to throw over all pretense of being disinterested advisors of student affairs and clamped a censorship on the daily newspaper. They sent their young stooges from the publications board down to our printery, and the editorial column of the paper carried the heading: "These editorials have been approved by the board of publications." Then followed a series of mock essays on the joys of springtime, the desirability of sprinklers that would throw water in squares instead of circles, and the like. The embarrassed president and the dean of men gave up this form of control, and tried other means, including personal intimidation; but it was too late. We had the Governor of the state on our side, he controlled some appointments to the board of regents, and sixty years of compulsory military training came to an end at that university.

This battle and many others went on, however, and the next year the editor of the paper also was a member of the Jacobin Club. I was to follow him, by right of seniority and general agreement, as editor in my senior year. But the habit of success had relaxed our vigilance. As the election to the editorship drew near, the authorities worked steadily behind us. They had found a weak spot in the wavering convictions of my fellow Jacobin, the incumbent editor. They turned his head with a great deal of flattering attention—the president would call him in for "advice" very frequently—and convinced him that it was his duty to stand again for election and for the good of the university prevent Sevareid from taking over the paper, even though this meant that the boy would have to change his life plan and enter the law school in order to remain on the campus. It was a miniature example of a recognizable political pattern: the liberal, softened by success and propinquity with the rich and powerful, renouncing his comrades

in revolt "for the good of all." When we discovered that this lad was "doing a Ramsay MacDonald" on us, the fight became intense and bitter. My friends pleaded with the boy for hours at a time, warning him that his victory would turn to ashes because not only would he lose all his friends but his sponsors would despise him as their tool. It was too late. The military officers, we found, had been working for months on two or three members of the publications board to prevent my election, and the president did something he had never stooped to before—he ordered his own faculty representative on the board to vote as he desired regardless of that gentleman's convictions. After all, he had to keep his job. In sum, the administration in its own behavior betrayed all the principles of political uprightness that it insisted we be taught in our classes. As I later learned from my friends, some of the men and women in the Greek houses, who saw their chance to begin breaking down the power of the Jacobins, deliberately spread a rumor that I needed the editor's salary because I was in trouble and "had to get married." (I was engaged to a girl in the law school, an influential nonconformist herself.) The ferocity and vindictiveness of the campaign reached unbelievable heights. In the election by the board I lost by one vote. Tammany methods, when thus applied, were unbeatable.

Loevinger, who was president of the publications board, broke the news to me in the law review office next morning, and I was stunned. I had worked three years for this position and honor, and by every rule was entitled to it. I had never hidden anything nor worked behind anyone's back. I had assumed the opposition felt as we did: that controversy was controversy, that a man's opinions were his own, and that, however anyone opposed them, he did not resort to calumny nor twist the very lives of his friendly enemies. I was the naïve liberal, still feeling somehow that truth could defeat a Hitler. Dimly I began to perceive the realities of political life. I was unable to speak and walked down the stairs. Sherman Dryer caught up with me, put his arm over my shoulder, and solemnly said: "This changes my whole philosophy."

When the news got out there was an uproar. Although I was doing my major studies in political science and not in the journalism department, all the members of the journalism faculty protested the decision, and about twenty-five of the thirty or so students on the newspaper staff signed an objection. They offered

to strike, to refuse to publish, but—still clinging to the liberal's characteristic belief that the persuasion of truth would somehow suffice—I refused this drastic move. A second election was forced, but after an exhausting all-night battle, the board confirmed its vote and we gave up. I became a minor hero and martyr; my opponent was expelled from the Jacobin Club, formally censured for "conduct unbecoming a gentleman" by the journalistic honorary society of which I was president, and continued as editor, a friendless, lonely boy. The pattern of power politics was carried out to its final orthodox step: I was called into the dean's office and with much flattery informed I had been chosen for membership in the senior honor society. This corresponded to a knighthood for an influential but defeated opponent of the ruling system, which uses the glamorous apparatus of royal orders as a political weapon.

After that I buried myself in my books, earning bread and board by rising at five each morning and working in the university post office before classes, handling and distributing bundles of the newspaper which I had cherished and lost. It was many months before the pangs of bitterness left me. I had one last fling. Every four years the students staged a mock political convention, of all parties instead of one, to nominate their choice for the presidency of the United States. As comic relief, I made a nominating speech for one Bernarr MacFadden, elderly exponent of vitamins and setting-up exercises, at that time (1936) seriously trying to get the Republican nomination. I hired a bugler, a girl acrobatic dancer with a fulsome bust, and a football hero with sizable biceps, and paraded with them to the stand carrying a banner that depicted a muscular arm wielding a dumbbell. The speech began: "Fellow Americans, are we men or mice?" and argued the need for a Strong Man in the White House. I was making a sarcastic attack on the preparedness program and warned with mock rhetoric of the imminent danger of the Japanese "invading the California coast in bathing suits." The mass of students in the field house screamed their delight. Sherman, with glittering eye, made an impassioned attack on Governor Landon, "who would sacrifice the youth of the land on the altar of the balanced budget." We nominated Floyd B. Olson. The downtown political writers complimented us on our oratorical mastery and wondered in print why this level of platform brilliance was unattained in state politics.

With this speech, with this message to my fellow students, I ended my university career. It was one year before the battle of Shanghai; two years before the *Anschluss*.

5

There was a new atmosphere in the editorial rooms of the old *Journal*, to which I returned. Even the older men, men who had spent a working lifetime on the paper and had achieved important editorial positions, had come to realize with reluctance that neither their gray hairs nor their loyalty had given them security, and the Newspaper Guild, inspired by Heywood Broun, had won over nearly all the staff. The spirit of the place was tense, but more courageous, less craven. The lines were tightening all over the world, and in every American factory and office the terms "Fascist" and "Red" were being put fervently and carelessly to local application. To publishers, the Guild represented a threat to freedom of the press, and they said they did not see how its members could be trusted to give the public a fair report of controversial issues, such as a labor strike. This was surprising to the Guild, whose members had never before remarked any desire for fairness on such an issue burning in the hearts of the publishers. They knew the publishers had been organized, however informally, with the Citizens' Alliance and the antilabor elements in the business community, and the working press regarded *that* as a threat to freedom of the press. American publishers began in this period to reap the painful reward of having subverted their precious public trust to private, selfish purposes. The truth was—and is—that the lowly hired hands in these institutions had a deeper sense of their duties to democracy than did the directors themselves.

Fresh from the theoretical battles of the classrooms, I was acutely concerned with the developing ideological struggle in the country. When a couple of Communist acquaintances came to me with the information that a semisecret Fascist group, the Silver Shirts, were organizing widely in Minneapolis, I went to work. It was an unbelievably weird experience; it was like Alice going down the rabbit hole into the world of the Mad Hatter. I spent hair-raising evenings in the parlors of middle-class citizens who worshipped a man named William Dudley Pelley, organizer of what they called the "Christian Party," devoted to driving out the

Jews from America and countering the "Communist Revolution," the exact date for which they professed to know—a few weeks ahead. They sang the praises of Adolf Hitler and longed for the day when Pelley should come to power as the Hitler of the United States. They had secret signs and symbols, saw the "Mark of the Beast" on American coins, put there by the archcriminal, Henry Morgenthau, and avidly read the hoary "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," which Hitler and Rosenberg had used. Governor Olson, of course, was a leader of the "Communist Plot," and harmless little Maurice Rose, the Governor's chauffeur, they designated an "international banker." One of the Silver Shirt leaders, a retired businessman, led me into his kitchen and opened his cupboards to show me the stocks of canned goods he had accumulated against the day of the Communist uprising, when he expected to barricade himself in his upper duplex. He raised a quivering finger and in a quavering voice informed me: "If it be God's will that I fall as a martyr to the cause at the hands of these beasts, I shall die here, in my Christian home, defending my dear wife to the end." They were quite mad.

My city editor refused to believe the story I brought back to the office until he himself had gained admittance to one of their seances. He returned to the office and said: "Get me a drink, quick! God, I feel I've been through the most fantastic nightmare of my life." The lunatic fringe in advanced, civilized America was a far more spacious crazy quilt than any of us had imagined. I took them seriously, as a cadre of Fascism, and we proposed to expose the organization in a series of articles. Then, to my surprise, opposition to this move developed from unexpected quarters, revealing a standard pattern with which I was to become familiar. My young Communist acquaintances wanted the story withheld. As Communists would be, they were convinced that the lunatics were merely the tools of a small cabal of leading businessmen in the city who were providing the money and directing the whole affair as part of a ruthless conspiracy to help establish capitalist Fascism in the country. We must wait until we proved this. The Communists, too, were living in a dream world, and their view of the local tycoons was as fantastic as the Silver Shirts' view of Morgenthau. I was realistic and experienced enough to know that. Then a group of liberal rabbis and wealthy Jews asked the editor to withhold the story. It would all be most painful to them, most

undignified, and would merely drag out into the open and abet a virulent form of anti-Semitism. It would be better to ignore the madmen and pretend they didn't exist. But the managing editor was a man of courage, and the stories were published—not as I wanted them written, as a cry of alarm, but as a semihumorous exposé of ridiculous crackpots who were befuddling otherwise upright citizens.

When the first article appeared, the paper sold several thousand extra copies. My Communist acquaintances refused to speak to me; the ordinary, poor Jews of the community highly approved the exposé; Sherman Dryer, already a power in the Farmer-Labor state machine, deplored the frivolous tone of the articles but tried —unsuccessfully—to persuade the party to make the Silver Shirt menace the main issue of the state campaign. And my personal life became a torment.

I was threatened by telephone and letter every day to such a point that my family was alarmed for my safety and my brothers wanted to sleep, armed, in my apartment. I knew perfectly well that Fascists of this type, like certain types of liberals, were quite incapable of physical violence, but as the threats continued I became somewhat worried myself. Odd characters, fuming and bridling, would march to my desk in the city room and demand to know whether I was a Christian or a Bolshevik. "Lifelong subscribers" would lecture me over the telephone, and, when I lost patience and lectured them back, they would call the publisher and I, to my disgust and amazement, would then be lectured by my bosses for being rude to a client. I sat in the balcony of the biggest Baptist church and listened to the influential pastor denounce me as a "Red," a foolish young "cub reporter." The latter accusation offended me deeply, and my serene bride said: "After all, darling, you *are* a cub reporter, really." I felt a hero one moment and a complete ass the next.

One arid afternoon the people buried Floyd Olson under the trees by a lake. In the glass-covered coffin his broad, strong face seemed pitiably weak and shrunken. For years he had suffered great pain, though he had never betrayed it in his face; but after death it was there and you could see it. When the news hawkers shouted the announcement from their corners, the noises of the street died down, and their voices with the shocking sentence were unbearably loud and distinct in the unnatural stillness. I saw

a streetcar motorman get down from his car and walk back from the newsstand with tears streaming down his cheeks. Many thousands had a feeling that someone in the family had died.

In the city room there was noisy activity, and I could observe an editor expostulating with a reporter, who seemed to be arguing back with a flushed face. It appeared that the editor was ordering the reporter to write a story which would show in effect that the Governor had had many drinking companions among the rich and powerful and had served their causes as much as he had befriended the poor and weak. The reporter stood before my desk shakily drinking water from the cooler and said: "Christ, do they have to throw in the hook even after he's dead?" I walked out into the parched, lifeless streets with a numb feeling of dismay. Could one never win? How weak we were, when so much had depended upon one human being! There was no one else. We had had to produce a genius before our side could win even a brief round. They could win with anybody now, with anybody, because they had a machine, they had something, everything on their side. This was the end of the party, the end of everything we had wanted it to become some day. Why was it always like this, everywhere in the world? Could common people be made to work for their own interests only if they had a great personality as their symbol? What was wrong?

Various "scoops" came my way during the year; I began to feel that I was a person of some consequence on the newspaper and vaguely to suspect that maybe I was different, too valuable an asset to require the support of my colleagues through the Guild organization—which, however, I ardently supported in the interests of weaker persons. I was brought down to earth abruptly. One day I was sent to get some facts from a local banker about a suburban camp that he and his friends were subsidizing to house and care for the unemployable, elderly panhandlers who were begging on the downtown streets. This was to be done under the aegis of a church, and the contribution of the businessmen was to be described in the paper as their voluntary assistance to a worthy charity. "Of course," confided the banker, "between you and me, we have a hardheaded motive. These filthy bums are edging too far up Nicollet avenue. They are begging in front of the better-class stores. If we don't get them away they will tarnish the high tone of these blocks and drive real-estate values down." He nudged me and winked. The potentate, letting the lowly scribbler into the

secrets of power! I delayed writing the story, and when an editor inquired about it, I was foolish enough to blurt out my feelings on the matter. I was told to conform or resign from the paper.

In the spring the Guild forced through a contract under which most of us would get something more than the subsistence wage we were receiving. Various oral promises to me of a salary raise had never been carried out, and by the new contract I would receive one of the biggest advances because of my previous years on the paper. But there was a loophole in the contract, unnoticed by the Guild but quickly spotted by the publisher's lawyer. One day I wrote a single paragraph "squib" about a veterans' meeting and called the organization the American Legion instead of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which it was. I was instructed to get my pay and my hat. Others followed me onto the street in quick succession. I buried myself in the musty files of the state library for weeks, trying to piece together the history of the third-party revolt in the Northwest, to understand what had formed the local community into the pattern I observed and how it fitted into the whole American society. A year or two later, a letter reached me in France informing me that the publishers had sold the *Journal*, apprising the employees of this abrupt change in their lives by a brief note found one morning on the bulletin board. The paper was closed down, and hundreds found themselves on the street.